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A MERP/BASIC D&D Scenario

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THE SUPERIOR FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION GAMES MAGAZINE

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Editorial

I knew I shouldn't have said it on the first page of last issue; I should have known the gremlins would strike again, laying all my plans to waste. I'm talking, of course, about the rash promise to go monthly from issue 5. Well, this is it, a brief two months later than the last one. To all those **Adventurers** who can't wait eight or nine weeks for the latest happenings at the **Once Bitten,** then the good news is, we **are** going monthly from now. That means another fistful of goodies due out towards the end of December, just in time for the festive season, and would you believe **Santa Claus**-- the Role-playing game? You wouldn't? Oh well, it was just an idea.

I know this one is a bit late for Halloween, but I hope you enjoy our vampire special-- after all, full moons happen every month!

Ste Dillon.

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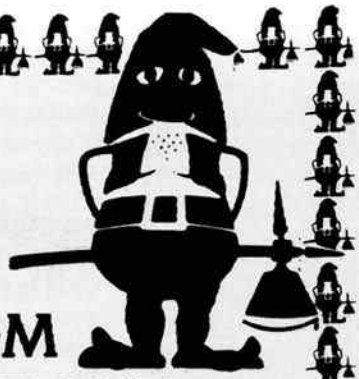

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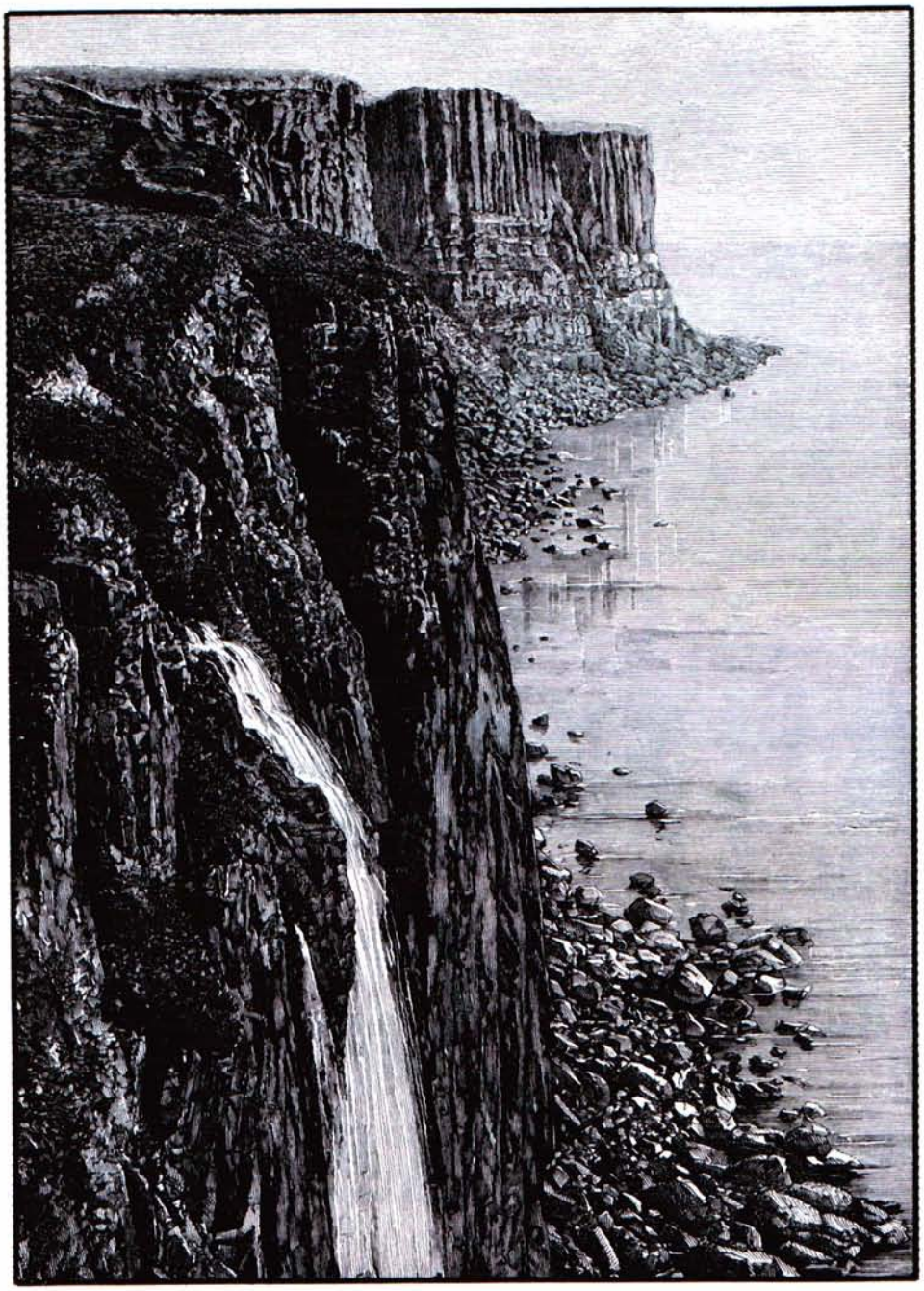
YOUR GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE

A CAUSE OF DEATH

BY JON SUTHERLAND
& SIMON FARRELL



Introduction

This scenario is of a free-form style for a party of 4 - 5 characters of low- medium level. A map of the general area is provided, but the exact location of it is left deliberately vague so that the GM may insert the adventure into his campaign as an extra scenario.

The Port of Hirta

Hirta is not unlike many other small trading ports that the party may have seen on the fringes of civilisation. By necessity it is a cosmopolitan place, trading with, if not welcoming merchants from many races. Its relative prosperity is owed to the safe anchorage that the harbour offers. At any time there are upwards of ten small to medium vessels docked there.

The past ten years have been kind to Hirta, Traders have prospered. Under the jurisdiction of local magistrates, all has been done to accomodate merchants, often at the expense of the local people.

Four months ago, a man called **Armin** led a small revolt. He was backed by elements of the dock-workers. They demanded full independance from central goverment and a greater share in the profits of the traders. Mercenaries were drafted in by the magistrate **Soay** and the uprising was brutally put down. Armin and the survivors of the rebellion fled to **Ruaival**, a small island just off the coast.

Content with the departure of Armin, Soay dismissed the Mercenaries and all returned to relative normality. Since Ruaival serves no real economic purpose for Hirta, despite the magistrates' authority over it, Soay was not prepared to finance an expedition to wipe out Armin for good. Contact with the island is not maintained all the year around, the islanders are a breed apart, mainly humans. Ever since Armin fled to the island there has been no contact at all. Soay is getting worried. More importantly, the taxes due last month have still not been paid.

Soay determines to send a party of mercenaries over to Ruaival, with a tax collector and claim the overdue taxes. In the back of his mind, he suspects that Armin is responsible.

Getting Hired

When the party arrive in Hirta, the GM should alllow them to settle into a boarding house and explore the town. No doubt they will be in search of work. In the main market square, one of the magistrate's officials will be in the process of calling for men to accompany the tax collector. Soay has agreed to pay 20sp per day for the duration of the employment. A group of local men have already volunteered for the job. It is up to the players to convince the official that they are better suited for the task. In any case the official decides to take on the party, four locals, a fisherman and his crew of three, in addition to himself and a deputy.

The expedition will begin at first light tomorrow. The players may spend the rest of the day finding out as much as they can about Ruaival and the locality.

Rumours:

1) Ruaival used to be used as a place of exile for criminals (true).

2) The island has two landing points, the village and in Petrel Bay (true).

3) The island is solely inhabited by humans (false).

4) The seabirds around the island attack boats and people who venture near the cliffs (true).

5) It is possible that once the boat has landed, it could be some time before the weather allows a return trip to Hirta (true).

6) Armin was the illegitimate son of Soay (false).

7) The island is cursed with a plague of demons and monsters (?)

The Voyage

The party arrive at the harbour at dawn, and find the boat ready to leave. The captain, **Ewen** owns a thirty footer in fairly good condition and knows the seas around the island like the back of his hand. His crew, **Gillie**, **Fettes** and **Angus** are normal local lads and not very talkative. The four local men, all with cheap swords and spears are unemployed dockers, the leader, **Rilatt** holds some grudge against Armin. His three men, **Fiddes**, **Ross** and **Uist** are somewhat frightened of the prospect of going to Ruaival. They are simple, Superstitous men who have rarely ventured out of Hirta. The official, **Colla** and his deputy **Kearton** are not armed and sit silently together on the quayside.

The voyage itself should not take longer than about an hour. During the voyage, the party may wish to assess whether they will be able to rely on the others if the need arises. The GM should decide how much of this information will come out on the voyage, but the notes below show the group's general motivations throughout the adventure.

Motivation of the non-player characters:

The Captain and Crew.

They will not leave the vessel, Ewen proposes to fish off the island whilst the others carry out their business, he will pick them up in four days from the village jetty. The GM should be aware that it was Ewen who took Armin to Ruaival and has supplied him by sailing to **Petrel Bay**. The last time he was due to drop off supplies, Armin did not appear.

The Dockers

Rilatt was taking bribes from the magistrates for some considerable time before the rebellion. His job was to tell them what was going on and what the Dockers were planning. He failed completely to warn the officials of Armin's plans, so well kept was the secret. After the rising was over, he was dismissed by his employer and the magistrates stopped paying him. He wants to prove himself by bringing back Armin dead or alive. His three followers will obey him to the letter.

Their first opportunity to leave the village and seek out Armin will be taken, they will not return until he is dead or they have been killed. In fact if Rilatt dies, the others will abandon the hunt.

The tax collector and deputy

Colla is simply there to collect the due taxes and will not engage in unnecessary violence with Armin. He has been ordered by Soay to report on Armin with a view to sending a larger force to the island to kill Armin. His deputy, Kearton is a trained killer, he will ruthlessly slaughter anyone who is the cause of the disruption of payments. If Colla is too easy on anyone, he will report to Soay with the hope of replacing him.

Ruaival

The island lies a scant three miles off the coast, but despite this, the dangerous voyage and the climate makes for an even greater sense of isolation than one could imagine. In the spring and summer months, the climate is often humid, but far from invigorating. In the early spring months, the island is subjected to severe gales (this is the time of the adventure). Winter blankets the island in snow, and the nature of the island coupled with the winds make for heavy drifts, capable at times of burying the sheep and goats, the principle livestock of the island.

The island is only eight and three quarter miles long and nearly two miles across. The only permanent settlement is Ruaival itself, and boasts a population of seventy-nine.

Ruaival Village

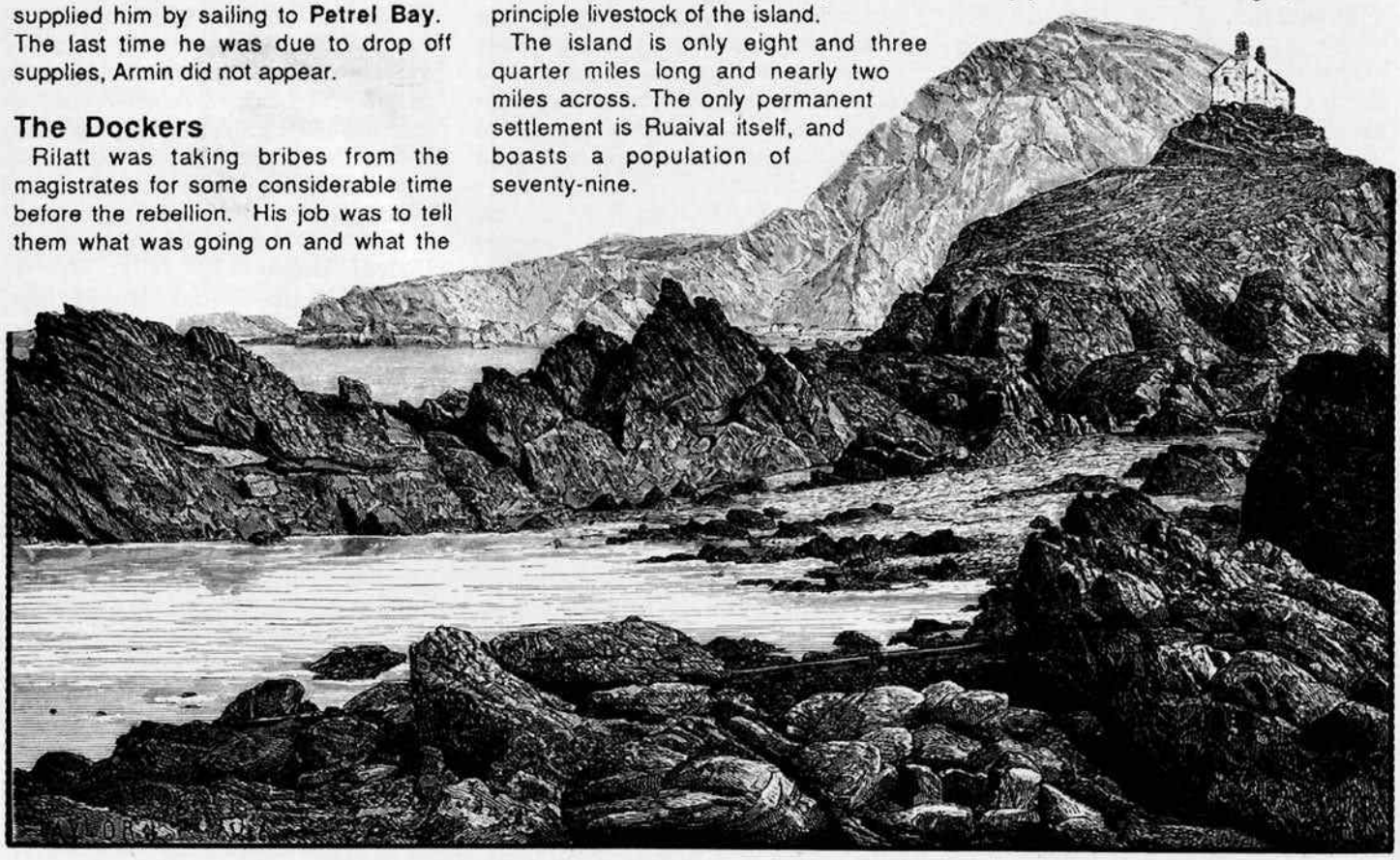
Straddling the only fresh water supply on the island, the river **Leigas**, the village is a motley collection of stone-built huts clustered together. The village is open to the elements all the year round. Outlying farmsteads are nestled in the folds in the landscape as far as **Oiseval** to the east and **Mullach** to the west. A simple stone jetty protects the river mouth, battered and scarred from the gales over the centuries. Dry stone wall enclosures criss-cross between the houses to shelter the livestock in the winter months. In this part of the island, there are no trees, just bracken and long grass that fade away and up into the highlands.

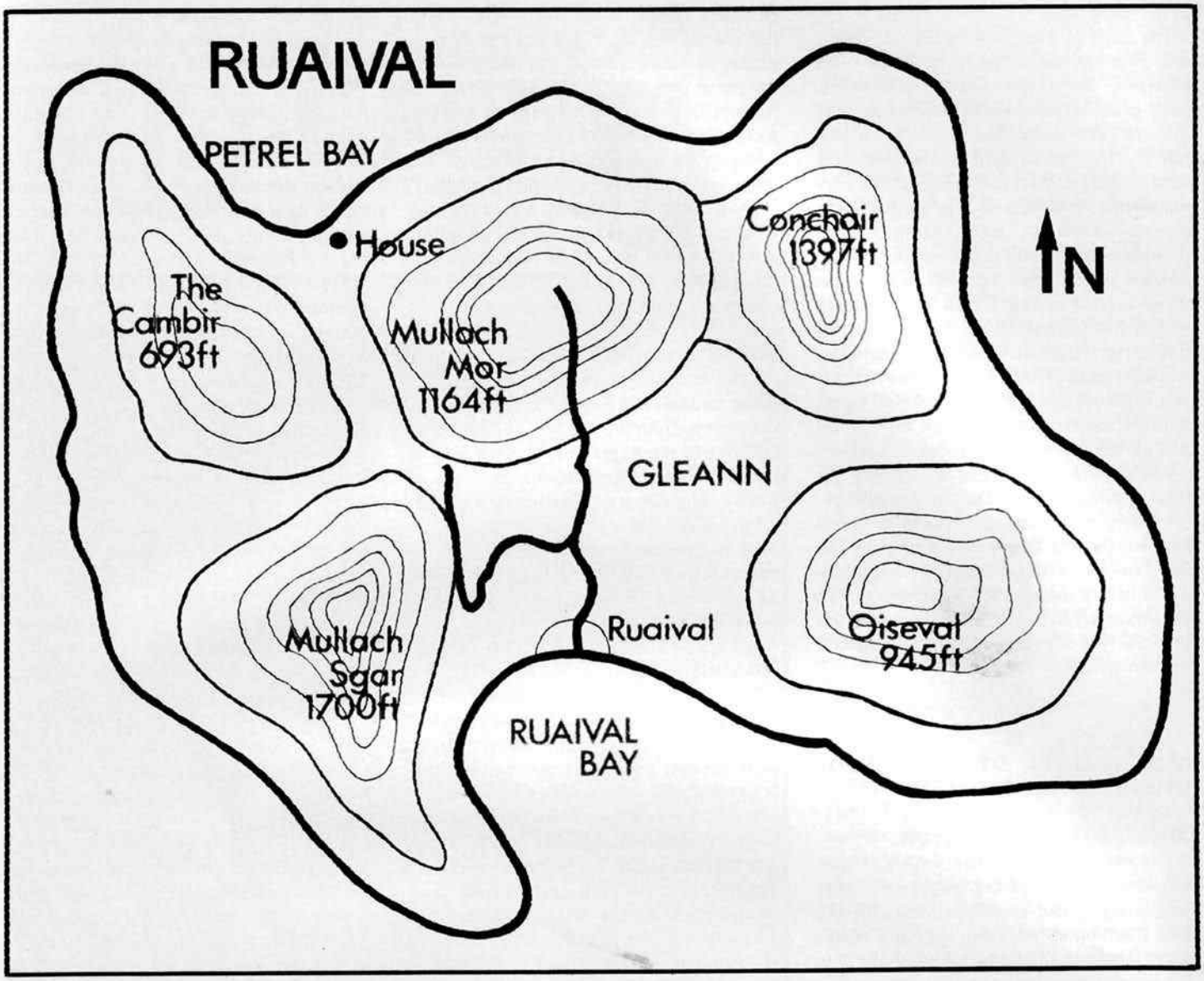
Player Encounters

The village is completely deserted, a few sheep and goats run off as the party approach the village. The houses show no signs of recent habitation. To the north of the village there are some fresh graves. Exhumation of the corpses will show that the bodies have been there for nearly two months. The cause of death: possibly heart failure; the faces are contorted horribly. A character with high *Perception* and *sight* will notice a series of puncture marks around the neck. The five bodies are all young males, human and naked.

There is a distinct lack of normal day-to-day items of household belonging. This fact intimates that there was some sort of mass exodus from the village.

On the outskirts of town, the players will interrupt three starving dogs; they are hungry and will attack on sight;





Reactions of the non-players

Colla and the deputy determine to seek out the population and find what has become of them. Rilatt will cover the east and climb Oiseval; the party, as 'experts' can decide which way to go, other than east. Colla will come with them. Ewen is petrified and tells Colla that he will come back to the village in four days time, at dawn and wait just two hours. If he sees no-one then he will leave. On no account will he, his crew or vessel dock again.

Rilatt and his party will agree to meet the players and Colla wherever they decide. The players must decide now where that will be, and when.

Mullach Sgar

Mullach Sgar overlooks **Ruaival Bay** and is the highest point on the island. From here you can see the coast-line and perhaps Hirta. The hill is lightly wooded, the track from the village follows a stream which touches the base of the hill then disappears towards **Mullach Mor.** At the bottom of Mullach Sgar are two rock pinnacles either side of the valley in which the stream runs. From a few hundred yards away the party can see a figure standing on top of one of them. As the party approach, the figure disappears from view. When the party reach the stone watch-point they find a pack filled with small pots, knives and rolled up clothing. There is evidence that a watch has been maintained here for a number of days.

On top of the Mullach Sgar are ten unmarked graves, a successful detailed search wil find the following words etched onto a nearby rock:

"The Voker Family - sad victims of the madness"

Exhumation will show that they have the same look as the other bodies from the village. The major difference is that they all have deep wounds in addition, close to the heart.

The Cambir

The cambir is the lowest of the hills on the island; whichever route, either from Mullach Mor or Petrel Bay the party will have to approach it by a cliff-top track. The full fury of the seabirds will welcome them. A huge flock, with the characteristics of **Crebain** for **MERP** and **Crows** for **AD&D** will attack the party. The attack will recede if the players flee inland. The GM should note that each time a character is hit successfully by the seabirds, there is a 5% chance that 'the madness' will be caught. The Cambir is deserted, although from the heights thay can see Petrel Bay and the house on the rocks. Off shore, some miles out, Ewen's ship is visible heading east.

Petrel Bay

The bay is a rock strewn inlet, treacherous to all but the most experienced of captains. A single stone house stands forlorn in the desolation. Evidence that several ships have come to grief along this stretch of the coast is the obvious reason for the lack of major habitation.

The house in the bay used to belong to a sect of religious people, long since departed from the island. The superstitious would not have any contact with them. This suited the monks and they thrived there until ten years ago. The building is now deserted and falling down. The roof has caved in and what wood is left has rotted. Inside the structure there is a colony of rats which will attack the party should they start searching through the debris inside.

Mullach Mor

This is the second highest point on the island, the view is almost uninterrupted each way. The source of the river lies here. Half-way up the barren slope are more graves, this time nearly twenty. Exhumation again will show that the same applies as to the **Voker** family. The cause of death seems to affect both young and old, male and female without predjudice. Mullach Mor meets Conchair in the east, whose wooded slopes dominate the island. Atop the nearby hill the party can see that the top appears bald, those with good eyesight may pick out shapes moving about at the summit. Below to the south-east is the Gleann, a rough bracken moor dotted with a few shapeless trees, a track seems to run across it from the village and up the slopes of Conchair.

Conchair

This is the highest point on the island. On it s summit is the last of the people on the island. They are frightened and have built a defensive wall of thicket around them. Armin is their saviour - he brought them out of the perils of their village and has fended off attacks from those with 'the madness'. There are only twenty-one of the villagers left. Armin has only eight followers left alive, They are hungry and very wary of everyone. If Colla is still alive, he will ask Armin to help the villagers to the rendezvous with Ewen in exchange for a pardon. Keaton will bide his time until they no longer need Armin, then will try to kill him.

Oiseval

Oiseval looks out over the island and from it s top there is a view as far west as Mullach Mor and Mullach Sgar. On top of Oiseval are the still warm bodies of Rillatt and his men, they have puncture marks on their necks and they are drained of blood. If the party are foolish enough to hang around, three villagers, (two females, one male) will emerge from the bushes. They are in fact *vampires*, a strange variety that does not fear the sunlight, since the affliction is more like a virus. The two females will try to get close to any males in the party, and the GM should take the party's attention by using the male to tell them that huge wolves are responsible for the attacks and that the party should take them to Hirta.

The vampires will try to bite any of the party or non-player characters if they have a chance. The females will use their feminine charms to trick the players. If the attempt fails, then the party will know the perils and may wish to leave the island. Colla should be used to convince the players that they should find out whether any of the islanders are still alive.

If he is not alive and if the party are intent on returning to the village, they should see a figure running up the slope of Conchair, they will then spot a movement of people on the top of the hill. This should convince them to investigate.

'The Madness'

The madness is a type of virus that one young girl caught from the seabirds. A few months ago a real vampire was killed on the mainland and his body cast into the sea. The birds ate from the corpse on the beach and contracted the virus. It is a form of insanity that is the first sign of the disease, but in later stages the host of the virus starts to take on the form and drives of a vampire. The victim is not a vampire as such, but can pass on the virus. Apart from the three vampires on Oiseval, there are twelve others left alive on the island, they are too frightened to launch an attack on Conchair, but will attack if the survivors are brought down to the village. The time and place of the attack is the choice of the GM.

Bringing out the survivors

The party, together with Armin will need to work out the best way to get the villagers to Ruaival Bay and out to Ewen's boat. They must time their move very precisely; if they get there too early he will not be there, if they get there too late or held up by attacks then they will be stranded there. If the GM wishes, one of the survivors could be in the first stages of the virus and could attack when required. Also if Kearton is still alive then he will take advantage of an attack to kill Armin. The party should try to save as many of the villagers as they can. Ewen, if he sees that there is danger, is likely to disappear into the distance, so care should be taken by the players not to spook him.

STATS FOR PLAY

MERP

Character	Level	Hits	Armour	DB/OB	Melee OB	Missile OB	Notes
Ewen	4	54	SL	30	20	30	coward
Gillie	2	18	no	20	20	29	
Fettes	2	26	no	25	20	25	
Angus	3	68	SL	55	35	30	bully
Rilatt	5	57	RL	65	105	70	
Fiddes	1	28	no	25	20	30	
Ross	1	31	no	35	35	-	
Uist	1	50	no	35	25	55	
Colla	4	14	no	15	15	-	
Kearton	6	105	CH	65	90	85	
Dogs	3	110	SL	25	70bi	-	three
Seabirds	2	10	no	50	25bi	-	30
Rats	1	15	no	25	25bi	-	11
'Vampires'	5	50	no	45	65bi	-	all

AD&D

Ewen :	2nd level fighter HTK 11 AC6 spear & sword
Gillie:	1st level fighter HTK 4 AC8 spear & sword
Fettes:	1st level fighter HTK 6 AC8 spear & sword
Angus:	1st level fighter HTK 16 AC& spear & sword
Rilatt:	3rd level fighter HTK 12 AC5 spear & sword
Fiddes:	1st level fighter HTK 6 AC8 spear & sword
Ross:	1st level fighter HTK 7 AC8 spear & sword
Uist:	1st level fighter HTK 10 AC8 spear & sword
Colla:	2nd level fighter HTK 3 AC9 none
Kearton:	4th level fighter HTK 21 AC4 sword
Dogs:	(3) wild dogs HD 1+1 AC7
Seabirds:	(30) as raven HD1-1 AC6 (note 5% chance of catching 'the madness')
Rats:	(11) HD1/4 AC7
Vampires:	HD3+3 AC4

Random Encounter Tables: roll D20

1	Large Bear
2 - 3	1 - 4 Boars
4 - 5	1 - 10 Deer
6	1 - 3 Dogs
7 - 9	1 - 6 Horses
10 - 12	1 -10 Ponies
13 - 16	1 - 20 Sheep
17	Jaguar
18	Large Snake
19	1 - 4 Spiders (large)
20	1 - 6 Goblins (landed and foraging)

Metamorphosis & lycanthropy

BY STE DILLON

History:

The lycanthrope has been well represented in various role-playing games- usually in the guise of were-wolves and were-bears. Other more exotic types include the **were-tusk** in Runequest and the **were-jaguars** of AD&D. In fiction and mythology, we are presented with the bear-walker **Beorn** in *Lord Of The Rings*, *Lon Chaney's* **Werewolf** and *Bram Stoker's* shape-changing **Dracula**, to name but a few.

Although vastly different, these creatures have a common-binding feature in their ability to transform their physical form, often under the lunar influence of night.

Practical & Physical Considerations of Lycanthropy:

The physical and physiological changes a man must endure in the transformation from human to beast must be a horrendously painful process, its credibility in real life must be equally difficult to bear. This process of particle transformation, or metamorphosis, is often overlooked by the average adventurer- how is it possible or rational for a 6' tall man to change into a flying creature with a wing-span of less than 24 inches?

To combat this rational line of questioning, we can argue that we are dealing in *fantasy*, ie. an alternative to the reality which you and I and the law of physics are familiar with. If you can accept shape-changing at this level, then all credit to your imagination. For a more technical explanation, we could turn to the laws of physics and the notion of variable density. If the size of a particle increases, without a corresponding increase in mass, then its density is lowered. An example of this is a particle of warm air, rising and expanding, cooling as it does. The particle suffers from a decreased density, and rises further. If we turn the tables on this notion, ie. we adjust the **density** of a particle, its size will be affected-- it is effectively 'squashed' or elongated. To elaborate further, if a body's particles can adjust their size and density, it also possible to adjust the juxtaposition of the particles to create a new shape altogether; from a man to a bat, for instance!

The same fantastic line of thought leads us to the ability of Dracula in some of his Hollywood incarnations to become a fog or mist. The human form is reported to contain enough H_2O to represent 90% of the total body weight. Added to the fact that H_2O can exist as solid (ice), fluid (water) or vapour (steam) and we have another form of particle transformation, albeit a fantastic sort of reasoning.

Whilst on the subject of practicalities, has anyone decided what becomes of the were-wolf's clothes when the moon is full? Do they simply get torn apart leaving him naked except for the barest essentials to cover his modesty a la The Incredible Hulk? Or are they so perfectly arranged that they fall off him at the slightest twitch? These considerations makes it essential for any character possessed of shape changing ability to wear clothing that can quickly be removed if necessary. This can create a few scenario suggestions for the enterprising G.M. - the party struggles across a heap of hastily abandoned clothes alongside the river, or encounter a naked man in a cold, draughty corridor. Or they may wonder why one of the party, a broad, bearded axeman, chooses to wear only the barest of clothing and very little armour....

Illusion:

On a more acceptable level, we can consider other explanations for the apparent changes in the physical forms of lycanthropes. One such rationale is the art of illusion. It is easy enough in a dimly-lit dungeon to imagine the flickering torchlight reflected off a contorted face to represent a monster or a demi-beast. The were-wolf spotted so often in a gloomy forest might easily be a possessed madman, his hair tussled and his lips pulled back in fury to expose the full length of his canines, further exposed by the rotten gum disease he has contracted through eating raw meats... add a wolfskin coat or fox fur hood and your average adventurer caught on his own would flee that gloomy forest and never go back!

Such illusory effects can form an interesting ploy for the GM who wants to put the frighteners on a party without being too vicious. Added to the *accidental* forms of illusion caused by environmental and natural factors, we also have the *magical* illusions employed by wizards and the like to gain a demoralising victory over too-cockey a party. This deliberate form of illusion is more readily exposed by the party if a ***detect illusion*** spell is to hand, but it can also be far more realistic, hence more effective.

Illusion can't account for some reported sightings of metamorphosis, of course. There is the obvious example of man turning into bat. A possible explanation for an illusory trick like this would be the magician's assistant: in this case, a pet bat or familiar. Coupled with a few simple illusory aids such as a swirling cloak or some other smoke-screen, and the man in the black cape will vanish, instantly replaced by a hovering, screeching, flying rodent with eager designs on the transfixed observer. The use of an animal familiar would also account for 'remote' attacks by a well-known fiend as, through the eyes of a wolf or bat, the magician uses mind control to stalk out his victims; the natural blood-lust of the animal would do the rest.

Benefits And Penalties:

The traditional vampire we have all come to know and love, without the trimmings of the above illusory capacity, has both benefits and penalties because of his strange ability/affliction. Normally, the creature's INTelligence isn't affected by the transformation from man to beast or vice versa, although this isn't always the case (see Chris Felton's article in **Imagine** magazine #28). There is usually a change in the character's strength, speed and dexterity, depending on the form it takes; obviously a bear is a lot stronger than a man, though not as dextrous or as fast as a wolf; a mist has no strength, but is infinitely dextrous. An obvious penalty for the transformation between species is the mode of communication; in bat form, a vampire cannot speak, in bear form a bear-walker can communicate with bears but not with his human wife, for example.

The memory of the being is often subject to change as with the case of the **"American Werewolf in London"**, whose memory (and control) of his actions in wolf form was out of reach of the human counterpart. In contrast, Dracula maintains control of his faculties throughout. The reason for this disparity seems to revolve around the notion of conscious, deliberate transformation, in that those lycanthropes whose changes are involuntary, subject to the phase of the moon, seem incapable of reasoning thought and hence have no recollection of their deeds when under animal influence. In contrast, those who have deliberate and articulate control over the transformation seem able to reason as a man when in animal shape, and have full recollection afterwards.

Common Features:

It is often said that men look like their pets; this is never truer than when dealing with lycanthropes. It is easy to imagine a bear-walker to have a bear-like appetite and temperament, as well as the overall physical appearance of a large beast. A were-wolf, one can imagine, would tend to be hairy and lithe; hardly a clumsy, balding middle-aged man with a limp. Fantasy cross-breeds such as the RQ were-tusk, of course, have strong physical similarities with the animal parent.

References:

For further reading on vampires, werewolves and lycanthropy, check out the following articles (if you are lucky enough to find a copy):

Imagine #28, **Dragon** #14, 17, 24, 25, 30, 40 and 42.

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AFTERMATH!

The boxed set provides solid basic play mechanics that were over 2 years in playtesting. Rules provided for modern firearms, NBC weapons and protections, mutations, survival, high technology and more. The game allows the referee to decide the nature of the holocaust that destroyed the world in which play will occur. Aftermath is for 2-6 players and a referee. It is a role playing excursion into a post holocaust world.

£19.95

PERILS AT THE PITSTOP

In August, 80 gamers found themselves at the starting line of a quite remarkable race track. The flag dropped, the teams leapt into their cars, and sped lickety-split down the M1 towards Coventry.

The villains of the piece, Dastardly & Mutley, started to use their usual repertoire of tricks, and the Boulder Brothers and the Ant Hill Mob were already jostling for position. It would take some very dedicated Wacky Races to get to the finishing line at Warwick University.

So ran the **Toon** competition at **Koancon** this year; a madcap knockout race that astounded players and game masters alike as they indulged in the most flamboyant and noisy orgy of gamesmanship I've ever witnessed. Bizarre, perhaps, but by all accounts fun.

Having fun was very much what Koancon seemed to be about. Besides the aforementioned, wacky competition, delegates of the convention could look forward to talks on **Middle-Earth**, **Pendragon** and **Robin of Sherwood**, two guest of honour speeches, films, and the facilities offered by a spacious gaming room.

Guests of honour, **Dave Langford** and **Pete Tamlyn**, assured their captive audiences of riveting speeches. Dave Langford proved to be as witty and incisive in person as he is on paper; alas, the rather tortuous libel laws mean I can't print any of his salacious comments.

Koancon '86, with around 100 attendees, was small but perfectly formed; by the time Koancon '87 comes along perhaps sufficient interest will have been generated to swell the level of attendance to that of Games Fair. The conspiracy to organise Koancon '87 is already under way; write to: Koancon, 53 Towncourt Crescent, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1PH for advance news (enclose SAE).

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Following the trail of the lonesome Citadel designer, Nick Bibby is now apparently working in France for Bridge Miniatures of Leon. 'Slim' from Asgard is over there making moulds, and, by all accounts, learning French too!

All of which casts some doubt over Asgard's standing as a figure manufacturer: my sources say that they no longer exist. Anyone care to prove me wrong?

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

A fortunate sneak preview of the manuscript for **Green and Pleasant Land** allows me to reveal some of the loathsome secrets contained therein.

Now Green and Pleasant Land has long been on Games Workshop's books as a supplement for the popular **Call of Cthulhu** game. Although Workshop have produced CoC scenarios, **Land** is their first stab at a real information pack. And the scope of this project is quite stunning: a comprehensive guide to English life in the 20's and 30's. It is perhaps surprising that Workshop has taken so long to get **Land** into the final stages of production.

Compiled by renowned hobby writer **Pete Tamlyn**, Land covers a multitude of useful information about running Cthulhu games in Britain. It deals with the effects of the Great War on English society - and its even more disturbing implications for player characters. (Sanity? What Sanity?) also covered are expanded guidelines for English eccentrics: in common with other material in Land, these are amplified versions of articles which previously appeared in White Dwarf.

After the stacks of information come three scenarios: **'Horror of the Glen'** - an arborescent adventure set in Scotland; **'Death in the Post'** - a variant of 'The Casting of the Runes', but pretty horrifying nonetheless; and **'Shadow over Darkbank'** - a quite intriguing mystery on the canals. Having been involved in playtests of all of these games I can attest to their nastiness.

PLEASE RELEASE ME

Grenadier UK are continuing with their sisyphean task of rivalling Citadel for bulk figure production.

Talented ex-Chronicle designer **Nick Lund** has been hard at work producing a dwarfen generals set. This masterpiece contains a couple of dwarf generals and a war table adorned with maps, quills and dusty tomes, plus a large dwarfen standard. Uniquely for a Grenadier UK set, this one comes boxed.

Future projects for Nick include a definitive set of orcs. Now there have been a considerable number of orc variants on the market over the years, including a remarkable range from, er, Nick Lund. Orcs must be in demand, which is funny because I always try to avoid them...

THE SPIRIT OF ROLEPLAYING

I'm amazed by the number of live Roleplaying groups that continue to pop up over the UK in the wake of Treasure Trap's demise. Further to my report about Labyrinthe and Mythlore in Adventurer #3, I've been contacted by **Spirit of Adventure**, a group operating in the Manchester area.

Now I find it a little difficult to differentiate between members of the various live roleplaying groups; my experience, though, is limited to said members bopping me on the bonce with foam implements at games conventions. Perhaps it is because of their reluctance to belt a mega-star like myself around the head that I overlooked Spirit at one of the Dragonmeets.

Spirit of Adventure can be contacted at: 1 Scarisbrook Road, Burnage, Manchester M19 2BT. Enclose an SAE for an information and venue sheet.

PRODUCT NEWS;

Thanks to TSR, I feel immortalised by the arrival of **IM1, The Immortal Storm**. This D&D module is the first of the modules designed for the Immortals (geddit?) D&D set. Mortals or immortals - I forget which at the heady levels of 36+ - struggle in a desperate battle to obtain the key to eternity. Barring feelings that it sounds like a Dr Who script, the whole adventure doesn't appear to be that bad; it provides plenty of fun in the true spirit of D&D.

For lesser mortals - around levels 10-12 - there is **I9, Day of Al'Akbar**, a ripping desert adventure which entails exhuming tombs and avoiding the deadly traps and curses that await the unwary. The object? To retrieve an ancient artifact.

Finally there is **MH9, Gates of What If?** - a titanic adventure for **Marvel Super Heroes** which pits the Fantastic Four and Spidey against a formidable extra-dimensional opponent. Would you be surprised if Doctor Doom appeared too? Nope, nor would I.

Good news from **Games Workshop** for **Runequesters**: a UK printed version of the third edition will materialise soon, and there are plans to release as much of the RQ3 range as possible in hardback form. The Runequest hardback, complete with colour pix, will essentially be the rules only section of the current Deluxe set. No, I don't know what will happen about the background either.

Fans of Derek Carver's **Warrior Knights** game can look forward to **Blood Royale** - another 7 hour long epic. Blood Royale is a European dynastic game which resembles a cross between Warrior Knights and Diplomacy: The difference being that deals are binding and have to be cemented by marriage. The five-year long turns allow players to breed and marry - and the sub-game of all this would appear to be to create the largest family tree!

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

From the diminuitive Koancon I stride boldly towards **Conspiracy '87**, the science fiction Worldcon, and a veritable giant in the UK's convention calendar.

With the usual number of delegates attending a Worldcon approaching anything upwards of 10,000 - rivalling the 6-8,000 of Games Day - there has to be plenty to keep fans occupied; failing this you can always meet people.

1987 sees the Worldcon's arrival in Brighton, thus giving British SF fans a chance to attend without the burdensome expense of air fares. More details about conspiracy '87 - which takes place from 27th August to 1st September - can be obtained from: Conspiracy '87, PO BOX 43, Cambridge CB1 3JJ (enclose SAE). Warning: it won't be cheap!

BY IAN MARSH

SHOPWINDOW

KINGS AND THINGS (£12.95)

by West End Games/Games Workshop

I must point out here that **Kings and Things** is only the greatly abbreviated name for the game, the full name would probably cover the best part of a page of **Adventurer**. The very striking box design shows a mounted knight with his mottley crew of supporters and quite happily conveys the light-hearted nature of the game.

The designer, **Tom Wham**, in this case abetted by **Doug Kaufman**, won a place in my heart many moons ago with his irresistible *"Awful Green Things From Outer Space"* game which **T.S.R.** released in a couple of editions.

The game is for two to four players, each being a minor noble in the kingdom of **Kadab**, but each trying to become Emperor, thus uniting the shattered country and winning the game. To press your claim you need to raise a rag-tag army of anyone (in the case of this game any **thing**) that will support you. The "things" that might rally round your flag come in many shapes and sizes from eskimos and plainsmen from around the world, elves and dwarves of high fantasy through to penguins, killer racoons, slime creatures and flying (yes flying) mammoths to name but a tiny selection. There are also heroes and fabled leaders who may come to your aid.

The numerous playing counters are sturdy cards and are humourously illustrated in typical Tom Wham style, while the board comes in hexagonal pieces which you randomly fit together before play, making a different terrain for each game. There are several different types of land and water hex; forest, desert, frozen waste etc. and each "thing" is a native of one type of terrain. Hence it cannot be relied upon to fight for you if you do not control any hexes of its preferred type.

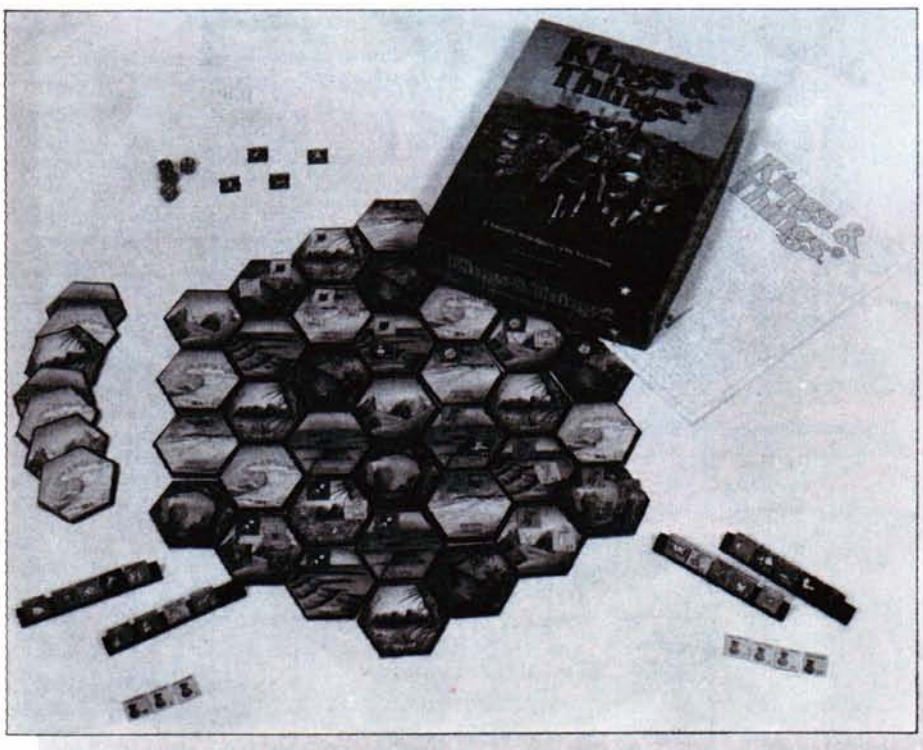
Hexes can be captured from your rivals or from the locals who appear at random if no player controls the hex. Gold is used to build fortifications and to hire or bribe "things" along the way. You collect gold for each hex you control and for each city, village, mine, oil well etc. which you can establish if you are lucky enough to acquire any.

Fortifications are built in four stages, firstly a tower, enlarged to a keep, extended into a castle and finally the ultimate strengh, a **citadel**. Once you have a citadel you have won the game, so long as no-one else builds one the following turn. If they do, you have to capture their citadel to win.

The rulebook appears lengthy but is quite straight forward and very entertainingly written, the brief history of the kingdom on the back page is a particular gem.

The game runs smoothly and there is plenty of scope for the strategist but luck plays a big role and can knock your plans for six. I found the game a lot of fun *up until* the closing stages, for if there are two or more citadels on the board, the necessary conflicts can be very time consuming and become rather a grind, which is a shame.

M. TETLOW



DARK EMPEROR (£18.95)

by Avalon Hill

Padrech dar Choim, the evil Necromancer, has returned from the realm of the dead to wreak his revenge upon the world that banished him-**Loslon.** With his allies, **Tol Morn** (lord of the vampires), **Mezal** (Avatar of the goddess **Szanbu**, Mistress of Fear and Terror), and the vampire legions he will strike against the weak human kingdoms; but where?

The components you find in the box are of Avalon Hill's usual high quality. They consist of the well written, sixteen page rule-book, a sheet of die-cut counters and the large mapboard. The map (and what a map!) is unlike anything I have ever seen before. The world of Loslon, as its designer says, is one of 'impact-crater geography where no plate tectonics operate'. This means that the map is of a world covered in seas above which rises the rims of multitudinous craters, on which are perched precariously the kingdoms of mankind. The very unusual

map is what lifts this game well out of the ordinary.

The Kingdoms of Man are divided against each other and individually are weak, but at the start, the evil Necromancer has very few forces of his own. Unless attacked by him or persuaded by diplomacy, most of the Kingdoms stay neutral and thus can be picked off piecemeal. The main advantage the Necromancer has is his ability to form Undead legions from his enemy's battle-fields. This is balanced by the Kingdoms' player having a greater chance of persuading the neutral forces to join him in his battle for Good .

The rules of the game are well written, easy to understand and contain some excellent ideas. Movement is novel in that each stack of units has a virtually unlimited movement allowance, but accumulates attrition points as it moves. This gives the result that the further a force moves, the more costly it becomes and the more chance it has of losing part of itself. Combat is easy to understand with a table that gives losses and retreats and can be affected by leaders and Magical Items. There are sections on Diplomacy, Taxation, Recruitment, Seige, Mercenaries and of course, Magic.

The Magic in **Dark Emperor** is Rune Magic, with the leaders and heroes being aligned with different elemental runes. The runes allow the raising of the dead, the calling of Maelstroms, the intimidation of neutral kings and more. There are also monsters and Magical weapons to be discovered and fought or used. Certain centres of power strengthen spellcasters and some artifacts either strengthen or add other Runic disciplines.

The game is fascinating strategically since the Necromancer has totally free choice of his initial entry hex, arriving by Magical Gate. Also the unusual map means that normal strategic thinking is worse than useless! This means that every game starts and runs differently as the players try to uncover strategies to cope with the different incursions of the Necromancer. Both players are faced with the problem of too few forces at the onset of play and must rapidly deploy re-inforcements or sue for the help of neutral kings. The production of new forces calls for the control of populated areas so as to levy taxes. This is the only problem with the game system in that tax calculation can be a time consuming and fiddly business. All other aspects of the game run smoothly.

I can truthfully say, in conclusion, that Dark Emperor is the most enjoyable and interesting two player game of Fantasy Warfare that I have seen in a long time. It is exciting, demanding, has lasting interest and very clear rules. The only niggling point is a confusion of taxes for the kingdom of **Zolahaureslor** with two different numbers printed on the map.

Of the missing Magical hex reported in a different review, I am happy to say that my copy of the game has a full quota of said hexes!

A. BAMFORD

CHILL: Vampires (£7.45) and Vengeance of Dracula

by Pacesetter Games (£4.45)

The role-playing game CHILL, whilst not as popular as the heavily subscribed Call Of Cthulhu game, does have its advantages over the latter, in that it is not tied to any particular mythos; tales of horror and the unknown from any field are admissible as scenario suggestions. This includes creatures from traditional mythology, folklore and fiction; denizens such as vampires, werewolves and mummies, who are usually stand-alone foes, independant of a universal cosmos or occult mythos. Full advantage is taken of this autonomy with **CHILL: Vampires.** This is a 96 page book designed as a CHILL Master (GM) aid, but is invaluable to a GM of any game where the presence of Vampirism is likely to arise. Written as an anthology by the S.A.V.E. curator and its leading vampire hunters, the document provides 'historical' background to vampirism and its origins, supplemented by a few pages of game information for CHILL players. Following this are feature articles on 10 vampires from myth or fiction including Count Dracula, The Vampire Ninja, Anton Garnier the Alpine Vampire, Hephaistion the Macedonian Vampire and other exotic forms including a guitar-swinging rock and roll blood sucker. As far as possible, the history of the vampire is detailed, a map is provided of his homelamd, reported sightings and incidents, and S.A.V.E.'s attempts at tracking and destroying the vampire.

These creatures are not presented as mere adventurer-fodder: they have survived numerous attacks and plots by S.A.V.E. Envoys and vampire stalkers down the ages, including the relentless efforts of Van Helsing, "an expert in vampire lore"; Harker's supposed destruction of Count Dracula was but a temporary victory and he again stalks the earth. S.A.V.E. intends to explore both England and America in search of him, and there are many others for the players to ferret out and destroy. Advice is given to potential vampire seekers, including the habits and forms of these beings, their last known whereabouts, special abilities and advice on how to trap and destroy them.

A potential source of many adventures, or as the basis for a whole campaign, **Vampires** also makes interesting reading for players and GMs who want to encourage a more serious attitude than "Oh, it's just a 7th. level vampire with pointy teeth!"

For those wishing to continue Dracula's story, it has already been accomplished with **Vengeance of Dracula.** the introduction serves as background to Stoker's original novel combined with **Pacesetter's** account of the tale to date - Dracula has returned to England.

The envoys are given the barest of clues and a sketch map to direct them to **Hillingham Estate** - home of Lucy Westenra, Dracula's first victim 7 years earlier. This is their base for investigations which will lead the players to **Carfax** in search of the count. During this adventure, players will encounter one of Seward's patients - a servant of 'the Master' with a sickening love of insects, sufficent murders and disappearances to keep them on their toes, and enough vampire activities to ensure a finale with all the PC's at each other's throats.

A detailed map of both Hillingham and Carfax Estate, and 8 player character cards are included in this 32-page scenario.

To conclude, for those with a passion for vampires, suspense and horror, this is a must. At £4.45 though, the material does seem a little scarce. I would have preferred more suspense, but there **is** a mystery to solve, and one which keeps the players guessing. There are also plenty of room descriptions and combat encounters (living, dead or otherwise). Definitely **not** a scenario for beginners. Oh, and if you don't have CHILL, you may find some of the terms and statistics unusual, but the scenario itself is suitable for any system. The style, however, is somewhat more cryptic and less sombre than the average Call of Cthulhu scenario.

S. DILLON

UNDEAD (£3.95)

by Steve Jackson Games

This is quite and old game in comparison (1981). It is of the pocket box variety of board games, with fold away paper maps depicting the city of London in 1890 (a handy game aid for the Victorian era), and crypt/indoor combat maps.

Based on Bram Stoker's **'Dracula'**, the Count is stalking the streets of London in search of prey, and is leaving coffins everywhere. The hunter player must search and destroy these, along with any vampires they might encounter, recruiting help as they go, and attempting to alert London by increasing their 'credibility rating'.

As a board game, it is played in alternate turns. Dracula's turn lasts from 9pm to 5am (game time), and he can perform 9 actions (one for each hour). The hunters get from 8am to 6pm-- hence, 11 actions.

Undead is a complete game which can keep 3 people occupied for a couple of hours at a time, and becomes quite absorbing and habit-forming. Although played as a board game, there are many elements of role-playing, and this potential can easily be fulfilled by an enterprising GM prepared to make up his own maps and scenarios. A tactical, skilful game, I would recommend it as a worthwile game, **despite** the low price of £3.95.

S. DILLON

PHANTASIE (£12.95)

by Gametime Leisure

The sample copy I received was only a pre-production copy, as **Phantasie** is not scheduled for general release until Christmas. The game is boxed and consists of a fold-up mapboard, re-usable Character Sheets, Weapons Tokens, Adventure Cards, Spell Cards and Treasure Cards.

On first sight, it looks much like any other fantasy board game, with a rather colourful board in the old *"Haunted House"* style. It is a game of the *Talisman* variety, which is a bit of a cross between a board game and a role-playing game. Each player takes a character sheet (which can either be rolled-up or pregenerated for speed) and attempts to develop that character's abilities at *combat, magic, sneaking* and *hiding,* as well as accumulating wealth by visiting the dungeons to which he has a map. As with any rpg, the characteristics determine your character's success or failure. Depending upon the type of character you choose, he may have an advantage, such as the wizard's *spell-casting* advantage, or the thief's ability to *sneak*. The wealth cards are taken to the Trader's Arms and are used to acquire armour, weapons and the much-needed spells to assist your character in his quest. There are **Random Monsters** and a **Wandering guard** who can be directed against your opponents (great fun!), areas of limited access and "Danger Zones" to avoid.

Movement is assisted by purchasing a horse or a mule, magic spells and so on, and this help is much appreciated as there is a lot of to-ing and fro-ing in this game. Oh, and watch out for **teleport** spells-- they can be very frustrating, especially when you think you've nearly made it.

However, it is the recurrence of short-term goals that sustains the players' interest; at the start of each round, you draw a card and hopefully, this will direct you to another location where treasure may be found. Of course, it may also lead you into combat, allow you to curse an opponent with a spell or give you some assistance for use at a later date. The ultimate aim is to work your way up the board to the *Alchemist's Lair,* defeat him in combat and the game is over... for now!

I am reliably informed that there are to be expansions that connect to the board to extend the game, in search of the dread lord Necromancer! This is a good idea because the game does verge on the role-playing side and you can get quite attached to your character in play. It would be nice to follow his adventures further with an expansion set.

One thing I do like about this game is its flexibility; most of the rules come as optional features which can be used independently of each other. The 'play-as-you-learn' rules mean you can virtually start playing as soon as you open the box. Overall, a very good game for 2-6 players, but it might suffer through the highly competitive state of the board games market at the moment.

P. Vicar

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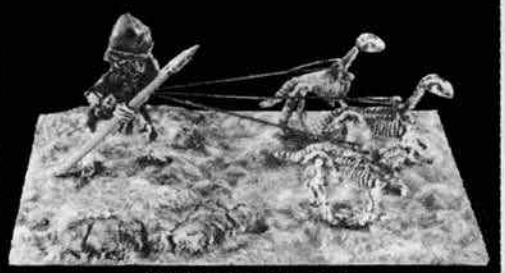

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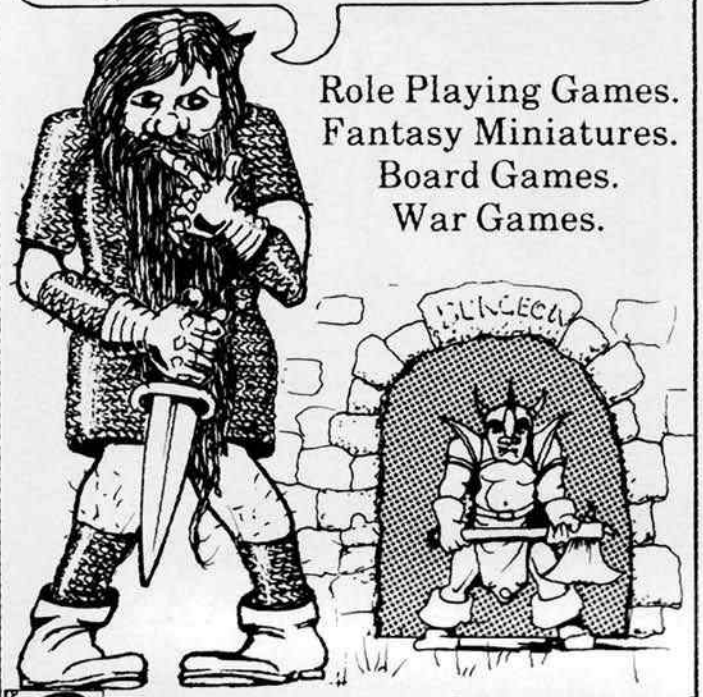

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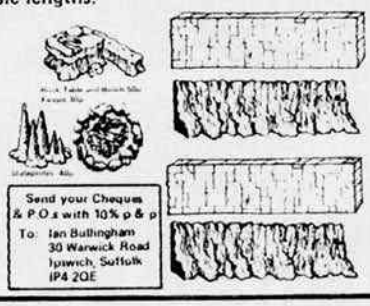

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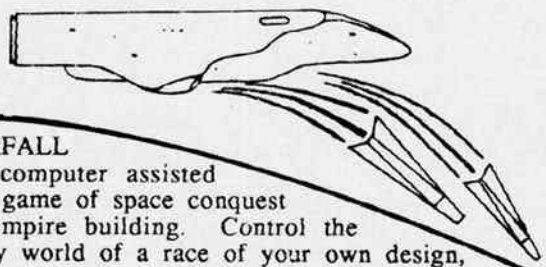

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Orc Bitten
I CAN EXPLAIN!
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HAVING SAVED WOWSER FROM THE FATE OF A TOAD-IN-THE-HOLE, FEY, AMBERGRIS AND THE REV. AMBSACE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.
53 HOPS LATER..
OHO! A LATE ARRIVAL FOR THE BANQUET. YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE SOME CLOTHES ON YOU, WOULD YOU?...
CRUNCH!
NNNNGH
MORE MINIONS OF EPICUS. RIPE FOR Re-education!
GREETINGS SIRS. HAVE YOU READ THESE INTERESTING LEAFLETS PRODUCED BY THE CHURCH OF Needy Clergy
LOST ONE EYE BLACK IF FOUND
WE ASK ONLY A SMALL DONATION
FLARED KNEE BRITCHES?
A WAY OUT! BLOCKED BY GIANT LICE! I MUST INVOKE SAINT SPIDEY'S AID
EXIT
SWIFTLY, WHILE THE GOSSAMER LASTS!
Oi! YOU AREN'T A MEMBER! GURGLE.
NEW MEMBERS: SIGN IN HERE
POKE
CASH!
LICE MEMBERS ONLY
THAT DOOR HAS LED US OUT TO SCATOPHAGIUM!
DEAD WEIRD
LOOK! A GINK WITH A HEAVY BAG!
OMIGOD, I HOPE NO ONE SEES ME DRESSED LIKE THIS
I SMELL MONEY!
YOU CAN COME AND CHANGE AT MY PLACE WOWSER....
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S IN THE BAG?
OF COURSE THE CHURCH OF Needy Clergy WILL NEED RE-PAYING FOR THE WAGON
NEXT: EASY COME...

FIGURES FRONT

by Mike Willis & Martyn Tetlow

FRONT LINE:

CITADEL MINIATURES, one of the world's largest manufacturers of metal gaming miniatures, and some would say, the producer of some of the best gaming models around, had very humble origins back in 1978. **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone** had been importing **Dungeons & Dragons** for the previous year or so from the U.S.A., and had been astonished at the interest caused by metal figures during visits to the US conventions. Fired with excitement, they got together with **Bryan Ansell**, and formed a new company, **Citadel Miniatures.**

The early designs came from another talented duo Bryan met about this time: **Michael** and **Alan Perry**. The Twins had developed useful modelling skills building large scale military models, and were to join Bryan as Citadel designers. Their abilities, coupled with Bryan's knowledge and technical skill, developed the distinctive Citadel style, and a veritable flood of miniatures followed. The half-a-dozen staff employed in the tiny workshop in **Newark** were hard-pushed to keep up with demand.

That much hasn't changed - though everything else has! Today Citadel's miniatures factory has 7 full-time miniatures designers and over 80 people concerned with the production, packaging and sales of miniatures. Specially - constructed workshops house modern spin-casting machines, and bright new full-colour packaging is produced on a regular basis, Citadel is constantly seeking new ways of preparing and presenting their models, and development continues as fast as ever, even delving into *plastics.*

The present Citadel design team combines the ever -present **Alan** and **Michael Perry**, and former **Asgard** designer **Jes Goodwin**, the inimitable **Kevin Adams** and a trio of displaced Scots from Edinburgh, **Aly** and **Trish Morrison** and **Bob Naismith**, who have between themselves, worked for every major figure manufacturer in the world.

Aly Morrison has probably been designing miniatures since he could walk, and had been working freelance for some years before joining Citadel. About six months later, he mentioned that his girlfriend, **Trish**, had an interest in making models, and showed Bryan some samples. Now they both sit in the designer's workshop, sculpting miniatures for a living.

Such is the reputation and the confidence in the Citadel formula, that many companies now have Citadel - produced licensed figures; the official *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* Miniatures, as well as *Dr Who, Judge Dredd, Stormbringer & Eternal Champion* and *Star Trek* Miniatures.

It is in the pure fantasy genre that Citadel models have made their mark and in which they are contenders for the position of market leader, as reflected by the votes of the public at conventions and through White Dwarf, with their staple figures of roleplaying and miniature wargames; Chaos Warriors, Orcs, Dwarfs and Fighters, and the demand for more of these is apparently insatiable.

Next Issue: Prince August's range of ready-mades come to the front line.

BACK TO FRONT:

Martin Parr of St Helen's has written in to give us his method of painting armour and shields. Quite simply, he uses **Humbrol** "Metalcote". These are available in tins or sprays, in several metallic colours including silver, bronze, gunmetal and gold. They are easily applied and when almost dry, can be polished by rubbing them to give a bright, metallic gleam. The only drawback is that care must be taken not to rub off any existing paint from the surrounding areas.

Metalcote Gunmetal is also highly recommended for giving an 'antique' finish. This is achieved by applying the paint and then wiping it off almost immediately. The deep folds and recesses remain dark leaving the highlights clean. This is especially effective for displaying Daleks and the like.

Base Colour	Ink Wash	Highlights
Silver	Thinned Black	Silver Poster Paint
"	Blue (for "Paladin" Steel)	"
"	Dark Brown (for "grubby" look)	"
Gold	Brown	Gold
Brass	"	Brass or Gold
Bronze	"	Bronze

UP FRONT:

Turning our attention to the clothing and/or armour of the figure, as a general rule it is easier (!) to paint the larger items, such as cloaks, tunics and breastplates first since this will reduce the chance of smudging areas previously painted.

Clothing:

First paint on a base colour of your own choice and allow it to dry. Next prepare a thin wash by diluting a darker tone of the same colour with an appropriate thinner. Apply this wash over the basic colour and it will flow into the creases and folds of the garment, giving it more depth. The detail can be emphasised even more by dry brushing or blending a lighter tone onto the raised portions of the cloth. If you wish, a very thin wash of the mid-tone can be brushed over the whole area to blend the shading together.

As an alternative, you can use a wash of drawing ink instead of thinned paint. Ink is transparent and tends to tint the undercoat even on the raised portions so some unusual effects can be achieved. For example a wash of red ink over a blue base will give a purple finish, blue over yellow will give a green finish, brown ink is great for toning down a red base colour etc.

Try some unlikely combinations, they may not work but they may produce something really exotic; let us know if you produce some interesting results!

Armour:

For armour I always use an acrylic base colour with an ink wash followed by dry-brushed or blended highlights.

I like to use Silver poster paint for Highlighting because it has a light texture and does not "Melt" when varnished. It is unfortunately not waterproof but this can be cured by mixing it with gloss acrylic medium. It is not necessary to adhere to this list: green and red ink washes can give some pleasing results.

There is no reason why armour cannot be painted in ordinary colours rather than metallic ones. After all, Arthurian legend is full of green, red and black knights and Samurai armour was frequently lacquered in a variety of hues.

All of these finishes can be improved by picking out some of the finer details, such as rivets and embossed patterns, in a different colour, eg. red and gold decoration on silver or bronze and blue armour.

As I said before it is always worth experimenting with different finishes and colour combination to produce something a little different.

CITADEL MINIATURES

Trooper in Power Armour
Painted by Martyn Tetlow

Imperial Space Marine
Painted by Martyn Tetlow

Minotaur
Painted By Mike Willis

Ogre
Painted by Mike Willis

Elf
Painted by Mike Willis

Feudal Knight
Painted by Martyn Tetlow

Chaos Dwarf with Dead Half-orc
Painted by Mike Willis

Strontium Dog Johnny Alpha
Painted by Martyn Tetlow

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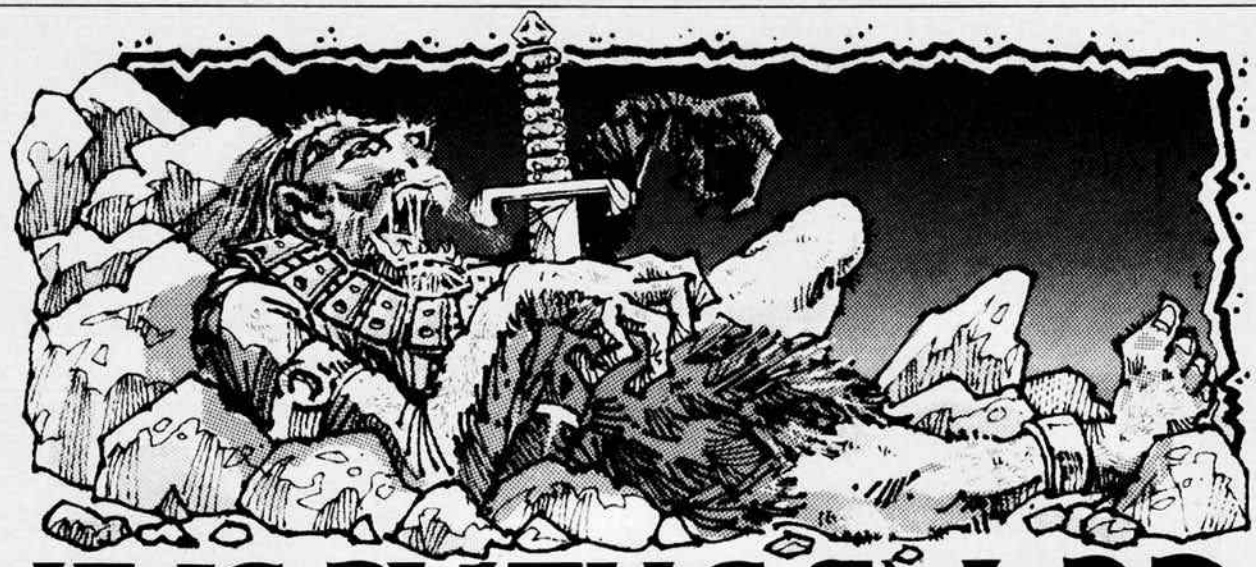

LIVE·BY·THE·SWORD

READERS' LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please address all letters to: LIVE BY THE SWORD, ADVENTURER, 85 Victoria Street, Liverpool L1 6DG.

MARK STANSFIELD, Morecambe: Please do not go monthly if it means sacrificing the quality, after all look at the state of some of the other monthly magazines. Six good magazines a year is better than twelve mediocre ones.

I don't know if you're psychic, Mark, but alas, even as issue #4 went to press, the decision was made to delay this one by another month. We are planning to go monthly from next issue, but I must stress that this will not be at the expense of quality. Surely 12 good magazines a year are better than six good ones...

▼

EUGENE WOLSTENHOLME, Liverpool: Do you know of any books about the legends and reported sightings of vampires? I would like to know more about these night prowlers.

Try the Arkham Lending library, Eugene!

▼

JOHN SMITH, Inverclyde: Issue 3, occult, next issue: investigations. Correct me if I'm wrong but both of these are Cthulhu based. A trend? An obsession? What will issue 5's theme be-- roleplaying in the 1920s, horror rpgs based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft perhaps?

▼

ADRIAN JOYCE, Orpington: "Once Bitten" and "Bomber" are both worth keeping but "Whiplash" seemed like Hammer House of Horror meets 2000AD Diceman with a touch of Lovecraft thrown in. On the whole, Aardvark Tamer is getting better all the time and so issue 5 should be mind-numbing. **(It is, it is!- one to get your teeth into...ed.)**

STUART LODGE, Devon: From what we've seen of your coverage of different sections of the hobby (ie. Fanzines Forever, Figures Front and now your PBM section), we are greatly pleased. Now can we please have a sensible column to cover books, boardgames and live-action role-playing. As for the editorial pages, could we have more? That's right, more news, more reviews, more letters, more competitions etc. Could we also have a page where readers can express their own opinions on games, problems with them and on ways to improve them?

▼

DOUGLAS THOMSON, Turriff: Paul Goddard's idea of using AD&D as a basis for Sword & Sorcery is ludicrous. Why not use MERP or RQ? It always seems to be AD&D which is chosen. Isn't it about time AD&D GMs had to do some hard work converting stats and/or scenarios to fit in with their system?

▼

KEVIN HASSAL, Kent: If you want a definition of SF, John Campbell (the writer-editor who dominated the 'Golden Age' of SF) described it as the "hopes and dreams and fears... of a technically based society". Now, if anyone out there really wants to get hold of some good SF, chuck Star Trek and pick up a copy of **The Road to Science Fiction #3** (Pub Mentor).

▼

LINDA LITTLE, Redhill: What a pity Wendy Graham didn't get beyond the tired old cliches on the meaning of SF and the even tireder and older books and films. For anyone remotely interested in SF who have got beyond Star Wars and Dr. Who (and who hasn't?), here is my booklist; **Frost** by Robin W. Bailey, **The Mote In God's Eye** by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, **The River Of The Dancing Gods** by Jack L. Chalker and **Master Of The Five Magics** by Lindon Hardy.

▼

PAUL VALE, Catford: Could you try to encourage your readers who are PBM players to send in useful hints about some of the games in which they participate, so that all players may use them to their benefit?

Now, Mr. Vale, I'm not sure that would be completely ethical. Nevertheless, I'm sure other readers may find them useful if we printed hints and advice on Wayne's PBM page...

▼

STEVEN HUTCHINSON, Corby: Has anyone told Jane Marple she got married? (See Town Crier #3)

Adventurer's readers aren't anything if they're not sticklers for accuracy are they?

▼

KEVIN HASSAL: I looked through those articles on cults in issue #3, and looking through the CoC rulebook again I can't find ANYTHING to suggest that the gods and creatures of the mythos, or their followers are "evil", or want to destroy humanity. Some of the cults, it suggests, are into 'unspeakable' practices- like human sacrifice. But just because their customs are different doesn't make them "evil"! To an Aztec, to be a sacrifice was a great honour! OK, so Nyarlathotep enjoys inflicting pain, but so do many humans. If all the creatures wanted to do was to wipe out humanity, they could easily do it. (Just think of the awesome potential of the Cthonians alone...)

▼

ANN MACEY, Newport: I have always avoided the verbal expression of

alignment and class-- I have never been able to see why a character would meet a group of fellow adventurers and announce "I'm a C/N halfling thief" because a) They can see I'm a halfling b) The less people that know I'm a thief the longer I stay out of trouble and c) As far as I'm concerned, being C/N means completely normal. Chaos is a nasty confusing word, and I'm not nasty or confused, and neutral sounds like something done to eunuchs, and being female I ain't one of those. So when I play, my alignment is known only to the DM, and in my own campaign, Know Alignment is one of those spells that require Divine Intervention. That is especially tricky if your deity is busy at the time: for example, a player prays to Rhiannon (The goddess of the horse) for "help to get out of this mess". She, being busy (and the dice roll being 1% over) mishears and sends a horse called Bess-- great. However, the player is in the ice caves of frost giants and the horse immediately starts to shiver with the cold. The party have to use their blankets to keep the horse warm, and then spend more time trying to get it out. If anything happens to Bess, the kind gift of the goddess... well...

Having had all the classic alignment arguments with local players and tried to get my point across unsuccessfully, Venetia Lee's article is a breath of fresh air, and I shall use it in future.

▼

JOE REVESZ, Lakenheath RAF: Why not place your scenarios near the centre of the magazine, so that it could be pulled out.

What? And spoil your copy of Adventurer?? Certainly not! It's a good idea, Joe, and one to bear in mind for the future.

▼

IAN SEWELL, Essex: I have one gripe; the Shop Window. In a review, I don't really want a shortened version of the rules and how the game is run. I want to know how good the game is, how complex, the playing time and how enjoyable it is. The information the reviewers gave in issue four was virtually what you can find out by looking at the box.

To answer that 'gripe', Ian, I must tell you what I think a review should be. Firstly, it should describe the quantity and quality of the contents if it is to be bought by anybody with a restrictive budget who wants value for money. Secondly, an indication should be given of how it is played, and how well it plays; enjoyment of a game is purely subjective, up to the individual reviewer, but if a review lets you know that a game lives up to its description, and you like the overall sound of it, then it doesn't really matter if the reviewer didn't enjoy the game.

▼

DOUGLAS THOMSON, Turiff: Fanzines Forever is a good feature to have, but I agree with Nick Edwards (ADV 4). What about getting the 'zine editors to write a short paragraph about their zine, telling people why they should buy that particular one? The editors would have a better idea of the type of articles which the zine has, and could give an idea of the articles which are likely to appear in future issues.

Do you suppose for one moment that I haven't seen through your disguise, 'Douglas'-- I know you're really a 'zine editor after the opportunity to give your zine a free plug?? Seriously, if allowed to write what they wanted about their own zines, the column might lose the semi-independant, objective approach that Alex and Ben try to adopt. Enough feedback on existing articles, many of you have responded by letting me know what you would like to see in future issues;

▼

ANDREW ELLIOT, Tamworth: Information and/or adventures concerning the Young Kingdoms seem a little thin on the ground in magazines-- I'm sure I speak for all **Stormbringer** GMs when I say more, more, more.

▼

MARK TAYLOR, Suffolk: 1) Some articles & scenarios for the much-neglected **Paranoia**; the new cheap rules-in-book format means that the system will become considerably more popular and the articles, if well-written, are highly entertaining and amusing to read anyway. 5) Some **Warhammer** please.

▼

M.A. WILLIAMS, Hastings: Would it be possible to print some **Car Wars** scenarios or new car types, etc.

▼

JON FREEMAN, Weymouth: Good to see 'minority' games getting an airing like **RQ** and **Bushido**, but what about **Traveller** and **Car Wars**?

▼

DAVE MORRIS, London: I agree with the chap who said you should run some background articles on the medieval period. Not just for GMs, either-- I can think of a few professional scenario authors who would benefit from even a rudimentary knowledge of medieval times. There are plenty of useful sourcebooks, of course. Perhaps more attention would be paid to these if the FRP hobby were not so dominated by the rules to the exclusion of convincing evocations of fantasy. G.G. Coulton's **Medieval Panorama** is the great classic. Bridge's **The Crusades** and Bishop's **Book Of The Middle Ages** are both in recent paperback editions, and either is certainly a more worthwile investment for a GM than **The Dungeoneer's Survival Guide**! Any player in a medieval campaign would learn a great deal about the outlook of the day from reading **Chronicles of the Crusades**, published by Penguin. As long as Adventurer keeps running articles on "how to play your alignment properly" (blaughh!) and whatnot, you are never going to get any kind of identity. Be a bit more daring-- cover a few more recondite areas like the anthropology or political psychology that underlies a society, and you will be on the way to ranking with magazines like *Imagine* and *Different Worlds*.

Dave, articles like those you are suggesting do not simply arrive at my desk. Even so, it would have to bear sufficient relevance and interest to satisfy a large cross-section of Adventurer's readers, who we know are of the intelligent variety, but that does not mean that they buy Adventurer to supplement their history lessons... We will find out, no doubt, as the response to your suggestions come *flooding* in.

▼

CHRIS HAWKE, Coventry: I disagree with Neil Grant that the power comes from within a spell-caster. If this was so, a 15d6 lightning bolt would completely drain a spell-caster. Instead, if he draws the energy from his surroundings he will be able to cope. The effect of this could easily be felt as torches burn down suddenly, and the like.

The spell-caster, it was stated, uses energy from within to initialise the spell. This input of energy (at the cost of mana to the caster) acts as a catalyst, and the greater forces of the universe or environment come into play to fuel the spell. There. Lessons in Magik part IV hath now ended.

▼

KARL DRINKWATER, Manchester: In one issue, you mentioned an Australian magazine, **Breakout**-- where should I write for details please?

Breakout is a war/fantasy/computer games magazine distributed by Games Of Liverpool Ltd, and is available from most games shops they supply.

▼

ALEXANDER HOHMAN, France: I would like to see a points system for readers to allocate a rating for the various games he plays, criteria like presentation, playability and completeness. Strategy & Tactics had something similar and was very useful as a buyer's guide.

▼

JENNIFER JACKSON, Redcar: Are you going to be producing ADVENTURER T-shirts at all? If so, would it be possible to arrange a competition for the best design-- you could give them away as prizes (Mine's a size 36, by the way).

Thank you for the idea. If demand dictates that we move into the fashion scene, who am I to resist? Official Adventurer plastic swords and shields could also be arranged, or official dice, or... That's all for this time-- see you again at Christmas... Ste Dillon.

FANZINES FOREVER...?

by Ben Goodale & Alex Bardy

Well, here we are again, and since we don't have any news this time, we'll get on with it....

We've just got one new fanzine to review this time, no doubt everyone is saving up for Gamesday. The new zine is **'Once In A Lifetime'**, which has probably the best sales pushover, it has 'all sales to Band Aid' written on the cover! This zine is very much a mixed bag, having varied contents, including a cult for CoC, chat, fiction, PBM reviews, and even a competition. Not bad really, with more to read than a lot of first issues, but not that good either.

Another zine which we recently got was BURNING RUBBER #2, #1 having come out 15 months ago it is almost a new zine. It's a zine dedicated to the JUGGERNAUT game, which appears to be on the same lines as Car Wars and Battle Cars. Since Juggernaut hasn't yet been printed this zine is pretty useless, but may be of use to players of the other two games. The editor intends to print the Juggernaut rules from issue 3 onwards.

Whilst Wayne Anonymous lets you into the delights of professional PBM gaming, we'll tell you about some of the amateur-run games trotting through some of the pages of various RPG zines. though often a lot slower than professionally run games, they are also a lot cheaper and thus will not be such a drain on your resources.

TOME OF HORRORS is the first to come under inspection. ToH specialises (at the moment) in running TOON by post. Surprisingly, this works very well, with the turn reports being a fun read, and lots of silly press. There is one game already running, entitled 'Bunfight at the OK Coral', and another will soon be starting, entitled 'Tour de Farce'!!! If you fancy a good half hour of utter walliness this zine is quite simply essential. If you don't you'll be missing out on a lot of very decent humour.

Next comes TELEGRAPH ROAD. Which has a sizeable postal gaming section. Most of the games are now full, but there are two major openings at the moment. First is in a game attractively called 'Class Of '69', where players take on the role of a student in an American sixth form college, set in...take an educated guess...The other opening is in the campaign game of 'Karush', which is very similar to professional fantasy pbm's, but isn't run to make money, and therefore is both slightly slower and a lot cheaper. In it you must play a character in the country of **Merilba**, and can drift about the capital city of **Cassocran**, or go off to the frontier wars, or do anything else you fancy trying! Well worth investigating.

IRON ORCHID is offering space in a 'postal rolegame' entitled 'Dreamworld'. Players take on the role of 'Dream Therapists' in a world based around a culture dominated by game-shows and governed by their hosts. The players have to uncover the identity of the controller of the world, namely 'The Master Of The Game'. Players' orders will be written in the form of fiction. If all this sounds pretty weird, why not buy Iron Orchid 9 where Nick will be giving an introduction to the game?

MORONICA RIPSNORE has something called 'The Mean Arena' PBM. In this game each player takes on a character who goes into a pseudo -town, with the object of killing everybody else, and not getting killed by roaming robots. This game is just starting, and looks set to be great fun. Turns will be every two weeks, with a full write up in each issue of the zine.

Next is 'The Land' which is the rather ominous title given to the PBM game currently being run by SEWARS. This is another game sounding good fun, where you begin the game cast ashore with no food, water, or clothing; your memory a blank, is this the way to start a weekend? Is this, in fact, the weekend?'!!! The Land is racked with tribes and armies readying themselves to take over total control. Life is cheap, death is cheaper'. This one certainly seems radically different, look into it!

Ben's own UTTER DRIVEL is running a PBM game which is a sort of mad fantasy En Garde! **variant** It is based around the election of a new president, as Super Hobbit's term of office is almost over. Somehow the election seems to have been half forgotten by the candidates (the players), as most of them seem to be either forming rock bands or drinking to excess. Still, they all seem to find time for the odd speech, whilst trying to keep their followers from battering those of another candidate. It's name? : 'Disastria' (think about it...). The game is full, though there may be a chance to play if anyone drops out, otherwise you could watch. Watch out for Twitchy & Miwonta!

HARVEST TIME is opening lists for various games, so getting in here might be worthwhile. Games being run are Diplomacy, Railway Rivals, 221b Baker Street, and a golf game with the odd title of 'Killer Rabbits'. In 221b Baker Street the players each have a detective, and have to try to solve the mystery by telling the GM what they do each turn.

There you are then, lots of games to think about joining. Now some interesting zines which have recently appeared.

WHITE RABBIT is the title of a zine now on issue 4. Although containing some rolegaming material it also contains a variety of other items. There is a non-too-original scenario about robbing a tomb, and a character class for AD&D which has some interesting aspects. The two fiction series are very readable, being much better than what a lot of fanzines term 'fiction'. Lots of music coverage is included, with album reviews and festival reports, and there are lots of other general items; e.g. an extract from 'The S.A.S. training manual'. Overall this zine is a great read, mainly due to the great variety.

Get the Champers out, STARQUESTER 6 has finally arrived!!, containing very little RPG stuff, the bulk of the pages being taken up with 13 pages of letters, plenty of waffle, reviews, more waffle, and a good comic strip. SQ is a neat zine with excellent presentation, and lots of discussion in the lettercol, ranging from the leaving of the co-editor, through things such as the responsibilities of fandom to Fighting Fantasy books. It all makes fascinating reading.

IMAZINE 15 has arrived, accompanied by a very 'up-market' glossy cover. Inside there is an interview with Mark Harrison (of TRAVELLERS fame), a Dr Who scenario, news, reviews, letters, and a couple of articles on role-gaming; one discussing the use of scenarios. Add to this some more discursive material (such as how to write articles and scenarios with the intention of publishing them) and you get a very worthwhile zine. Can you afford to miss out?

Finally, just a little plug for Alex's new zine, CEREBRETRON, which is dedicated to Sci-Fi RPG's. By the time you read this it will be available. For those who still play SFRPG's this zine is likely to be of some interest. It carries background articles (eg Time Travel, computers, etc.), and other related material.

RELEVANT ADDRESSES

Alex Bardy, 28b Gladsmuir Road, Archway, LONDON N19 3JX (Editor of **EH?**, #8 now out @ 30p - PBM/Chat & Editor of **CEREBRETRON**, #1 now out @ 60p - SF/SFRPG)

Ben Goodale, Cairnmore, Crianlarich, Perthshire, FK20 8QS (Editor of **UTTER DRIVEL**, #6 now out @ 60p - FRP/Chat)

Once in a Lifetime: (45p, 24 A5pp)
Graham Jackson, 25 Withers Road, Lydiate, Merseyside, L31 OBX

Moronica Ripsnore: (60p, 40 A5pp)
Gordon McLennan, 36 Solway Place, Muirhead, Troon, KA10 7EJ

Sewars: (60p, 32 unreduced A4pp)
Chris Bayliss, 12 The Fryth, Basildon, Essex, SS14 3PN

Tome of Horrors: (60p, 40 A5pp)
Gordon Moir, 115 Vardar Avenue, Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 7RR

Telegraph Road: (60p, 40 A5pp)
Jeremy Nutall, 49 Longdown Road, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 4 QH

Imazine: (75p, 24 A4pp)
Paul Mason, 11 Waller Road, New Cross, London, SE14 5LE

Starquester: (65p, 36 A5pp)
Mark Oswin, 103 Church Lane, Backwell, Bristol, Avon, BS19 3JW

The White Rabbit: (50p, 40 A5pp)
Maurice Thomas, 75 Aeron Hall, C.L.W., Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, SY23 3AS

Iron Orchid: (50p, 36 A5pp)
Nick Edwards, Cherry Lea, Wells Road, Dundry, Bristol, Avon, BS18 8NE

Harvest Time: (60p, 40 A5pp)
Martin Veart, 10 Cedar Drive, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9HA

Burning Rubber: (40p, 20 A5pp)
Rune Relic Entz., 186 Dunraven Drive, Derriford, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 6AZ

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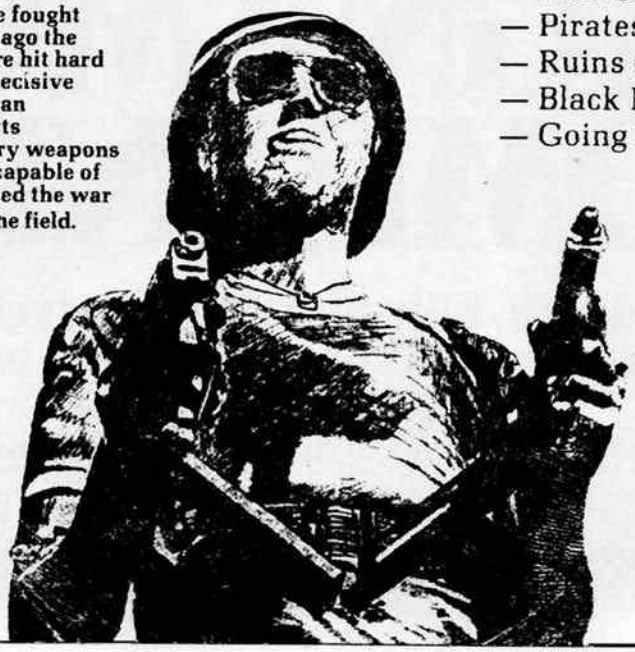

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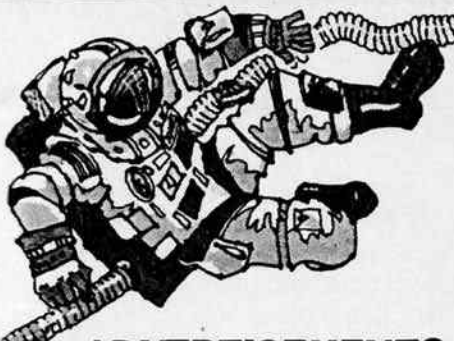

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Scatophagium Campaign

Editor's Comments:

Those familiar with the chronicles of recent events as portrayed in the leaves of Adventurer under the guise of the cartoon "Once Bitten" will doubtless be aware of the talents of Incantor Whek; he has illustrated some of the more 'notorious' elements of Scatophagium with a degree of artistic excellence, managing to capture the theme and flavour of both our city and our drinking houses.

For your further instruction into the ways and whereabouts of our lawful and respectable town, and theretofore encourage more of the recent visits we have had from adventuresome types as yourselves, I have made extensive 'negotiations' with Incantor Whek to allow us to print the following pages. In addition, we have scoured the works of local historians, antiquarians, politicians, mages and the nobility, to bring you further narrative and background to give you a greater understanding of our ways and our evolution; to open the door to your adventures.

Almost 18,000 years of history with, for the greater part, no appreciable advancement of technology may, for those from a more progressive background, be difficult to accept. But given several pantheons of active and jealous deities aware of the decline of the supernatural in technological societies, and the swift and terrible ends met by those unwise enough to attempt to further the scientific method, it is easier to understand. The gods prefer a static society. Of course, the continual depredations by organised hoards of men, monsters and demons of a chaotic persuasion help to maintain an unprogressive condition, and the ebb and flow of humanity around the **Island Dominions** reflect man's "two-steps forward, two-steps back" staggering development.

The adherence of an individual to a specific religion (many are on offer) is of great importance in **Scatophagium** as healing, restoration and the other clerical talents are unavailable or hideously expensive to those seeking such services from a church they do not regularly attend and contribute to.

As Scatophagium waxes wealthier, the devotion of its worthies shifts towards the worship of **Chessum**, the so-called New God, away from the traditional veneration of **Manud** and **Imeprath**. The theocracy of **Brennit** despatch numerous missionaries to the "frontier" town, and have succeeded in converting **Lord Vector** to the "merchant's" creed of **Holy Orthodox Fundamentalism**, which offers guaranteed salvation to those rich enough to afford the numerous hefty donations required of supplicants.

Within **Escatir**, magic is regarded with some suspicion and many practitioners maintain a reputable front such as a scribe specialising in obscure and arcane scripts, an antiquarian, bookdealer or a dealer in magical items (paradoxically acceptable as most folk would be willing to avail themselves of the benefits of a magical article, but are somewhat more wary of intelligently directed powers). The more powerful mages dispense with such subterfuge, and in Scatophagium **Marasmus Wheel** is openly allied to Lord Vector in the capacity of adviser and expensive thaumaturgic virtuoso.

Certain deities have seen to it that there should be an extremely regular calendar of thirteen months, each having 28 days, the full of the major satellite, known variously as **Punti** or **Juno**, falling on the night of the fourteenth.

Despite pirates, frequent shipwrecks and the large assortment of marine predators, sea travel is the preferred form of transport, for those with a choice. For those without, the roads are proudly deemed safe enough in daylight that a reasonably equipped party might go unmolested ten miles in any direction from the town.

A vast plateau lies to the south beyond **Curmurwall**, believed to be populated by terrible creatures and the remnants of ancient non-human civilizations. Less exotic life forms inhabit the waters and countryside about Scatophagium. The most notable of these being the **Drake** (elasmosaurus) and the occasional dragon...

Chronology Of Scat.

17,000 Wooden fort and stockade upon motte (mound). Fishing community to south of river.

17,105 Fort destroyed by unknown agency.

17,351 Armed outpost and trading post established on site of present naval garrison by Regrater Sutler, dealing in horseflesh and marine products (Oyster beds exploited magically).

17,395 Trading activity in decline due to nomads finding more lucrative markets for their horses, and the oyster beds being all but played out. Eleemosynary Realtors take charge of site from Sutler. Agent of estate Frovelle dispatched to Scat. to assess potential. He does not return, but a brief preliminary report is received; "...sell quickly if buyer can be found..."

17,424 On Fulthess, the court of Buree is wracked by intrigue. Cathetus Vertex buys the Scatophagium site as a 'safe haven' without having viewed the property.

17,425 Cathetus Vertex, victim of machiavellian plots, escapes Storp with three sailing ships, a small armed force and a number of hapless hangers-on and devoted retainers and lands to south of river Scat. Camp established on site of Sutler's trading post.

17,427 First Hall of Vertex built upon motte. Fortifications begun. Vertex dynasty established with the birth of Sine Vertex.

17,571 Third Hall of Vertex erected.

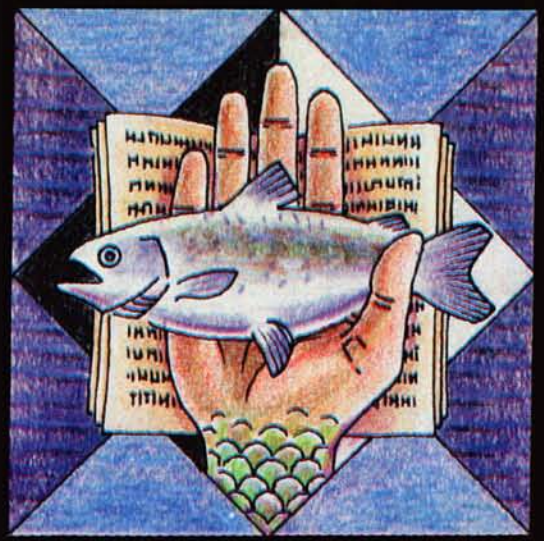
17,599 Tangent Vertex, the present Lord Vector's grandsire is born.

17,666 Vector born to Volute Vertex and Paradigm of Bunberg.

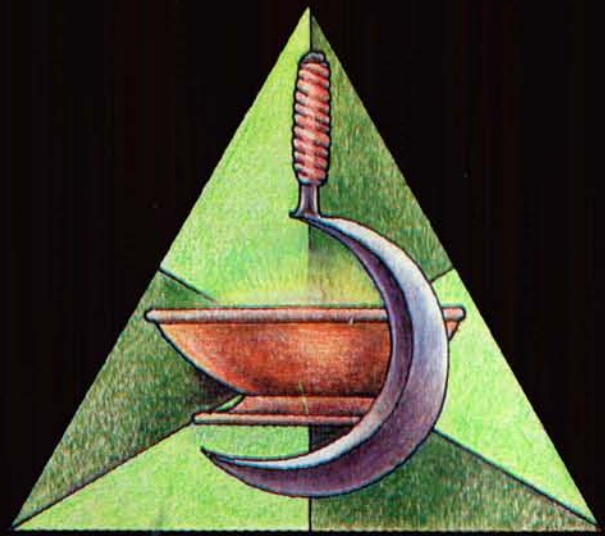
17,708 Basilica re-dedicated to Chessum.

By Robin Parry

MANUD, Patriarch and Judge, God of Order, Destiny and Justice.

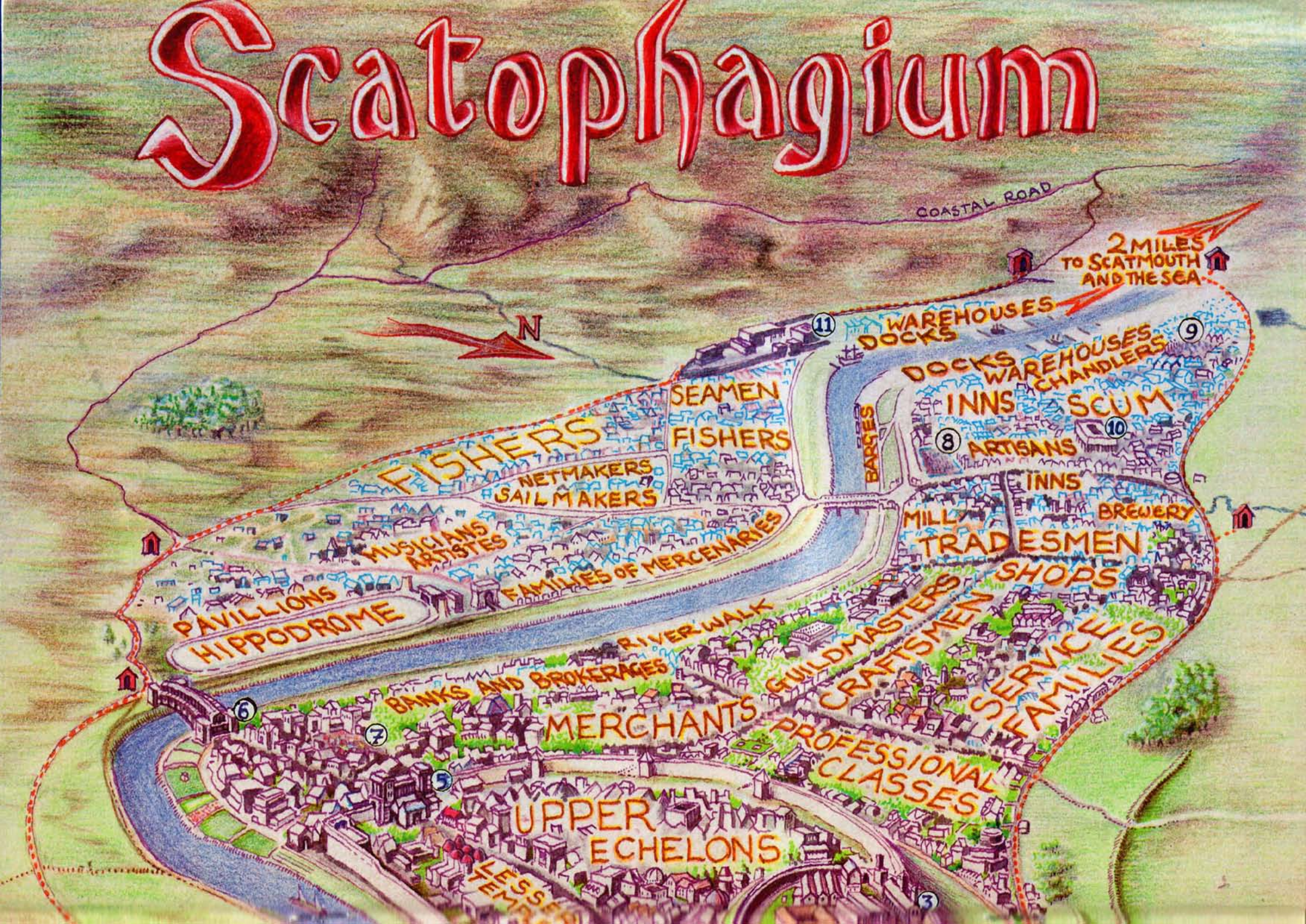


IMEPRATH, Farmer Matriarch, Goddess of Harvest, Health and Family.



CHESSUM, Administrator, Progency of Imeprath and Manud. God of Prosperity.

As the crow flies Scatophagium lies about a hundred miles south of the clerical city of Brennit. Due to the perspective of the view the distance from Brennit to Temenus, capital of the province, is over two hundred miles; from Temenus to Storp is seventy- five. The red spots denote centres of human habitation.


Scatophagium
COASTAL ROAD
2 MILES TO SCATMOUTH AND THE SEA
N
WAREHOUSES
DOCKS
DOCKS
WAREHOUSES
CHANDLERS
INNS
SCUM
ARTISANS
BARGES
SEAMEN
FISHERS
FISHERS
NETMAKERS
SAILMAKERS
INNS
BREWERY
MILL
TRADESMEN
SHOPS
MUSICIANS
ARTISTES
FAMILIES OF MERCENARIES
PAVILLIONS
HIPPODROME
RIVER WALK
BANKS AND BROKERAGES
GUILDMASTERS
CRAFTSMEN
SERVICE
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MERCHANTS
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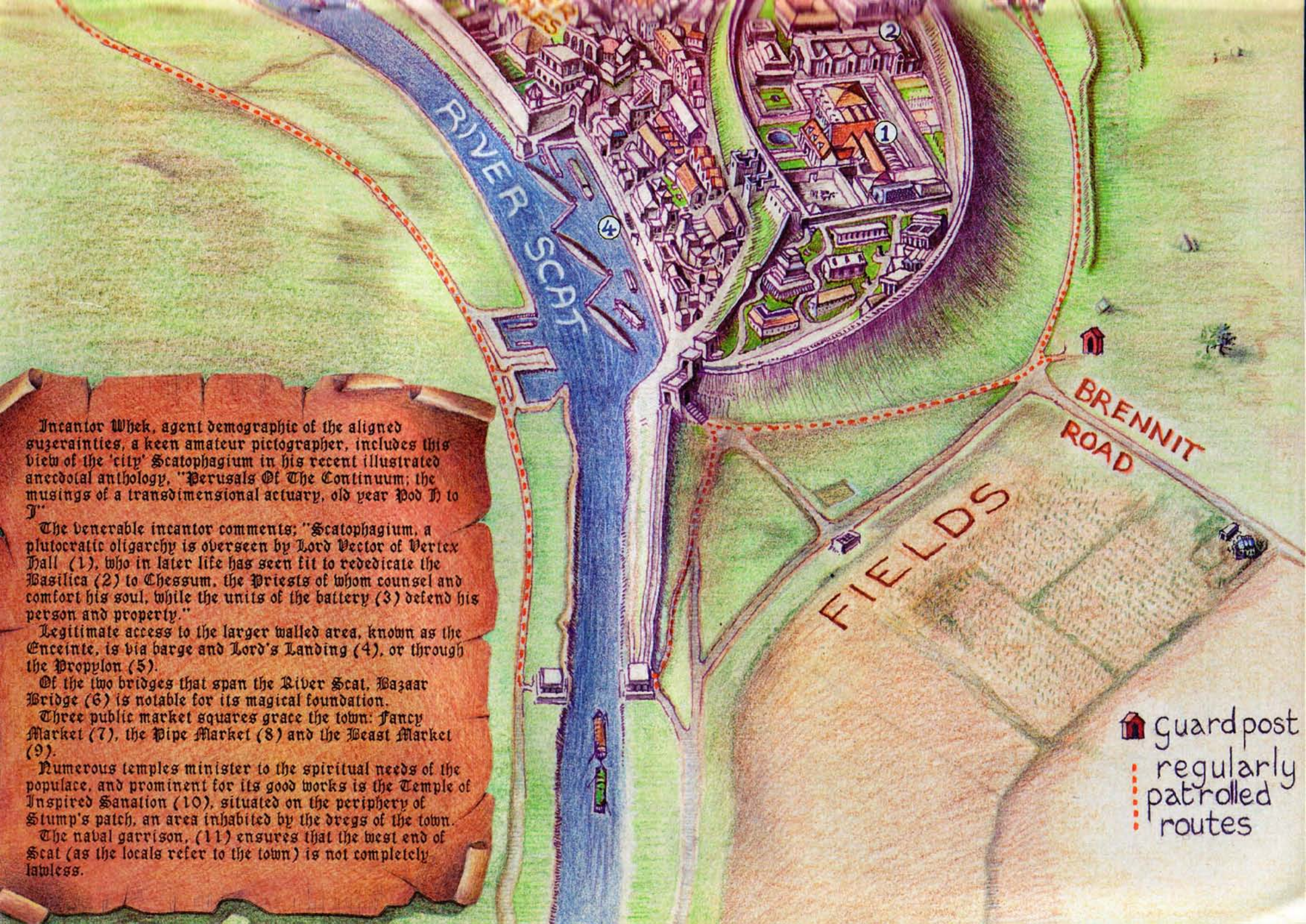

Incantor Whek, agent demographic of the aligned suzerainties, a keen amateur pictographer, includes this view of the 'city' Scatophagium in his recent illustrated anecdotal anthology, "Perusals Of The Continuum; the musings of a transdimensional actuary, old year Pod H to J".

The venerable incantor comments; "Scatophagium, a plutocratic oligarchy is overseen by Lord Vector of Vertex Hall (1), who in later life has seen fit to rededicate the Basilica (2) to Chessum, the Priests of whom counsel and comfort his soul, while the units of the battery (3) defend his person and property."

Legitimate access to the larger walled area, known as the Enceinte, is via barge and Lord's Landing (4), or through the Propylon (5).

Of the two bridges that span the River Scat, Bazaar Bridge (6) is notable for its magical foundation.

Three public market squares grace the town: Fancy Market (7), the Pipe Market (8) and the Beast Market (9).

Numerous temples minister to the spiritual needs of the populace, and prominent for its good works is the Temple of Inspired Sanation (10), situated on the periphery of Stump's patch, an area inhabited by the dregs of the town.

The naval garrison, (11) ensures that the west end of Scat (as the locals refer to the town) is not completely lawless.

NUK
ESTOVE
SHEB'NI
BUNBERG
FOUTRETIR
GOR VITHR
DABORIEN
LADRONE SEA
BRENNIT
BIDDULT
ESCATIR
FUNNEL
SCATOPHAGIUM
TOLLSELD
LESSER EATHE
GULF OF APA
GREAT EATHE
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HAGGO

by Brian

Richard Haggopian, perhaps the world's greatest authority in ichthyology and oceanography, to say nothing of many allied sciences and subjects, was at last willing to permit himself to be interviewed. I was jubilant. At least a dozen journalists before me, from various parts of the world, had made the futile journey to **Kletnos** in the **Aegean** to seek **Haggopian** the **Armenian** out; but only my application had been accepted. Three months earlier, in June, **Hartog** of **Time** had been refused, and before him **Mannhausen** of **Weltzukunft**, and therefore my own superiors had seen little hope for me. And yet the name of **Jeremy Belton** was not unknown in journalism. I had been lucky on a number of so-called "hopeless" cases before. Now, it seemed, this luck of mine was holding. Richard Haggopian was away on yet another ocean trip, but I had been asked to wait for him.

It is not hard to say why Haggopian excited such interest among the ranks of the world's foremost journalists. Any man with his scientific and literary talents, with a beautiful young wife, with an island-in-the-sun, and - perhaps most important of all - with a blatantly negative attitude toward even the most beneficial publicity, would certainly have attracted the same interest. And to top all this Haggopian was a millionaire.

For eight frustrating days I had waited on the Armenian's return to **Haggopiana** - his tiny island hideaway two miles east of Kletnos and midway between **Athens** and **Iraklion**, purchased by and named after himself in the early 40's - and just when it seemed that my strictly limited funds must surely run out, then Haggopian's great silver hydrofoil, the **Echinoidea**, cut a white scar on the incredible blue to the southwest as it sped in to a midmorning mooring.

With binoculars from the flat white roof of my Kletnos - hotel? - I watched the hydrofoil circle the island until, in a flash of reflected sunlight, it disappeared behind Haggopiana's wedge of white rock. Two hours later the Armenian's man came across in a sleek motorboat to bring me news of my appointment. My luck was indeed holding! I was to attend Haggopian at three in the afternoon; a boat would be sent for me.

At three I was ready, dressed in sandals, cool grey slacks and a white T-shirt - civilised attire for a sunny afternoon in the Aegean - waiting for the motorboat when it returned to the natural rock wharf. On the way out to Haggopiana, as I gazed over the prow of the craft down through the crystal-clear water at the gliding, shadowy groupers and the clusters of black sea urchins (the armenian had named his hydrofoil after the latter), I did a mental checkup on what I knew of the elusive owner of the island ahead:

Richard Hemeral Angelos Haggopian, born in 1919 of an illicit union between his penniless but beautiful half-breed **Polynesian** mother and millionaire Armenian-Cypriot father - author of three of the most fascinating books I had ever read, books for the layman, telling of the world's seas and all their multiform denizens in simple, uncomplicated language - discoverer of the **Taumotu Trench**, a previously unsuspected hole in the bed of the South Pacific almost seven thousand fathoms deep, into which, with the celebrated **Hans Geisler**, he descended in 1955 to a depth of twenty-four thousand feet - benefactor of the world's greatest aquariums and museums in that he had presented at least two hundred and forty rare, often freshly discovered specimens to such authorities in the last fifteen years, etc., etc....

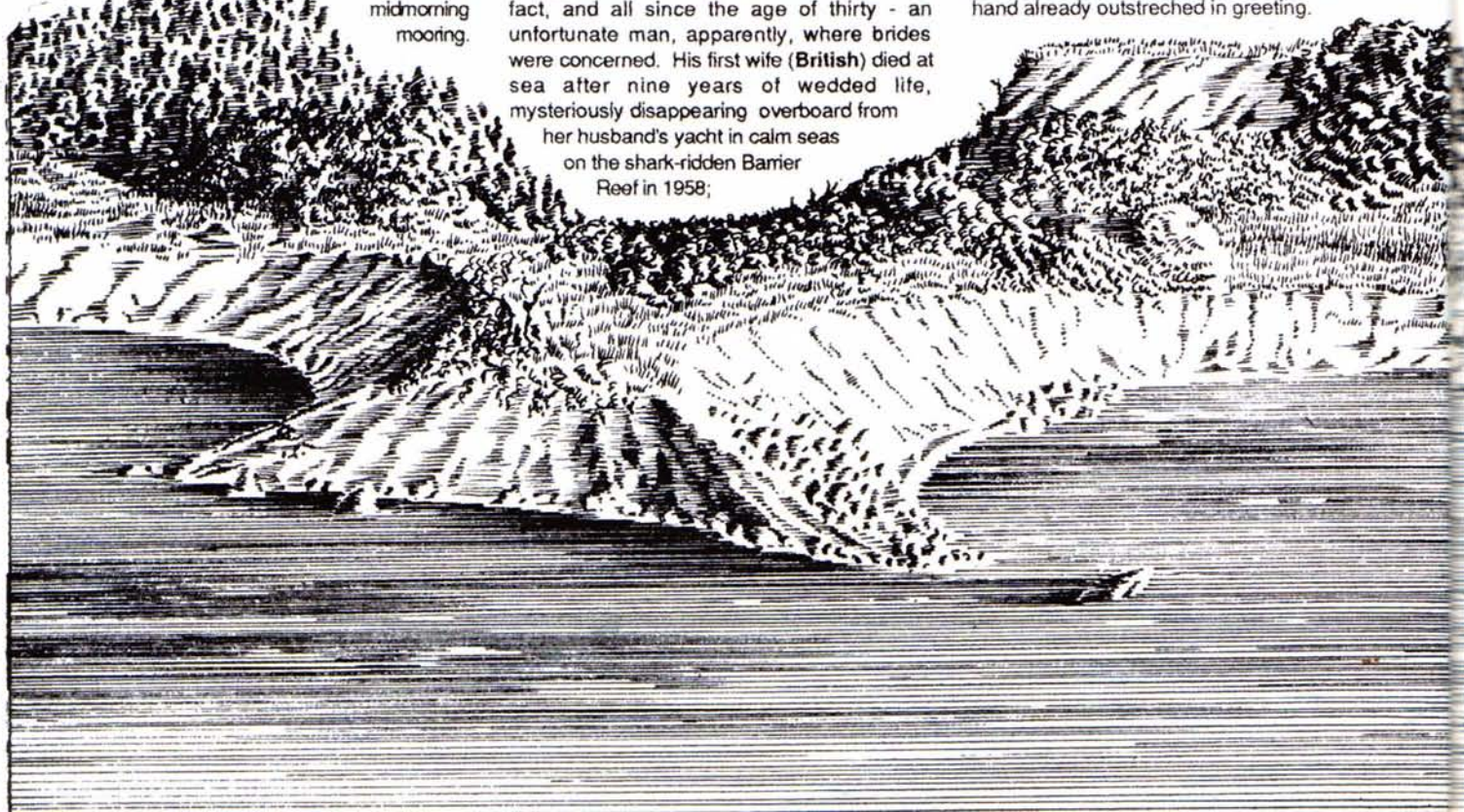
Haggopian the much married -three times, in fact, and all since the age of thirty - an unfortunate man, apparently, where brides were concerned. His first wife (**British**) died at sea after nine years of wedded life, mysteriously disappearing overboard from her husband's yacht in calm seas on the shark-ridden Barrier Reef in 1958; number two (**Greek-Cypriot**) died in 1964 of some exotic wasting disease and was buried at sea; and number three - one **Cleanthes Leonides**, an **Athenian** model of note, wed on her eighteenth birthday - had apparently turned recluse, since she had not been seen publicly for more than two years.

Cleanthes Haggopian - Yes!

Expecting to meet her, should I ever be lucky enough to get to see her husband, I had checked through dozens of old fashion magazines for her photographs. That had been a few days ago in Athens, and now I recalled her face as I had seen it in those pictures - young, natural, and beautiful in the Classic Greek tradition. She was a "honey," and again, despite rumours that she was no longer living with her husband, I found myself anticipating our meeting.

In no time at all the flat white rock of the island loomed to some thirty feet out of the sea, and my navigator swung his fast craft over to the left, passing between two jagged points of salt-incrusted rock standing twenty yards or so out from Haggopiana's most northerly tip. As we rounded the point, I saw that the east face of the island was formed of a white sand beach, with a pier at which the Echinoidea was moored. Set back from the beach in a cluster of pomegranate, almond, locust, and olive trees, there sat an immensely vast and sprawling flat-roofed bungalow.

At the dry end of the pier my quarry waited, until with the very slightest of bumps the motorboat pulled in to mooring. He wore grey flannels and a white shirt with the sleeves rolled down. A wide, silken, scarlet cummerbund was bound about his waist. His thin nose supported heavy, opaquely lensed sunglasses. So this was the great man: Haggopian - tall, awkward-seeming, bald, extremely intelligent and very,very rich - his hand already outstreched in greeting.



PIAN

Lumley

He was something of a shock. I had seen photographs of him of course, quite a few, and had often wondered at the odd sheen such pictures had seemed to give his features. In fact the only decent pictures I had seen of Haggopian had been pre-1958, and I had taken the quality of later shots as being simply the result of poor photography; his rare appearances in public had always been very short ones and unannounced, so that by the time cameras were clicking or whirring he was usually making an exit. Now I could see that I had short-changed the photographers. He did have a sheen to his skin, and there must also be something wrong with his eyes. Small tears glistened on his cheeks, rolling thinly down from behind the dark lenses. He carried in his left hand a square of silk with which, every now and then, he would dab at this telltale dampness. All this I saw as I approached him along the pier, so that right from the start I found him - strange.

"How do you do, Mr. Belton?" His voice was a thick, heavily accented rasp, conflicting with his polite inquiry and manner of expression. "I am sorry you have had to wait so long, but I am afraid I could not delay my work..."

"Not at all, sir, I'm sure this meeting will amply repay my patience."

His handshake was unpleasant, though I tried my best to keep him from seeing it, and after he turned to lead me up to the house, I unobtrusively wiped my hand on the side of my T-shirt. Patently that sheen to the man's skin was the result of sun oil. His hand had seemed greasy. An allergy, perhaps, which might also explain the dark-tinted sunglasses.

I had noticed from the boat a complex of pipes and valves between the sea and the house, and now, approaching that sprawling yellow building in Haggopian's wake, I could hear the muffled throb of pumps and the gush of water. Once inside the huge, refreshingly cool bungalow, it became apparent just what the sounds meant. The place was nothing less than a gigantic aquarium.

Massive glass tanks, some of them room length and ceiling high, lined the walls, so that the sunlight filtering through from exterior porthole-like windows entered the room in greenish shades that dappled the marble floor and gave the place an eerie, submarine aspect.

There were no printed cards or boards to describe the finny dwellers in the huge tanks, and as he led me from room to room it became clear why such labels were unnecessary. Haggopian knew each specimen intimately, his rasping voice making a running commentary as we visited in turn the bungalow's many wings.

"An unusual coelenterate, this one, from five hundred fathoms. Difficult to keep alive - pressure and all that. I call it *Physalia haggopia* - quite deadly. If one of those tentacles should even brush you....phttt! Makes a water baby of the man-o-war." (This of a great purplish mass with trailing, whispy-green tentacles, undulating horribly through the water of a tank of huge proportions.) Haggopian, as he spoke, deftly plucked a small fish from an open tank on a nearby table, throwing it up over the lip of the greater tank to his "unusual coelenterate." The fish hit the water with a splash, swam down and straight into one of the green whisps - and instantly stiffened! In a matter of seconds the hideous jellyfish had settled on its prey to commence a languid ingestion.

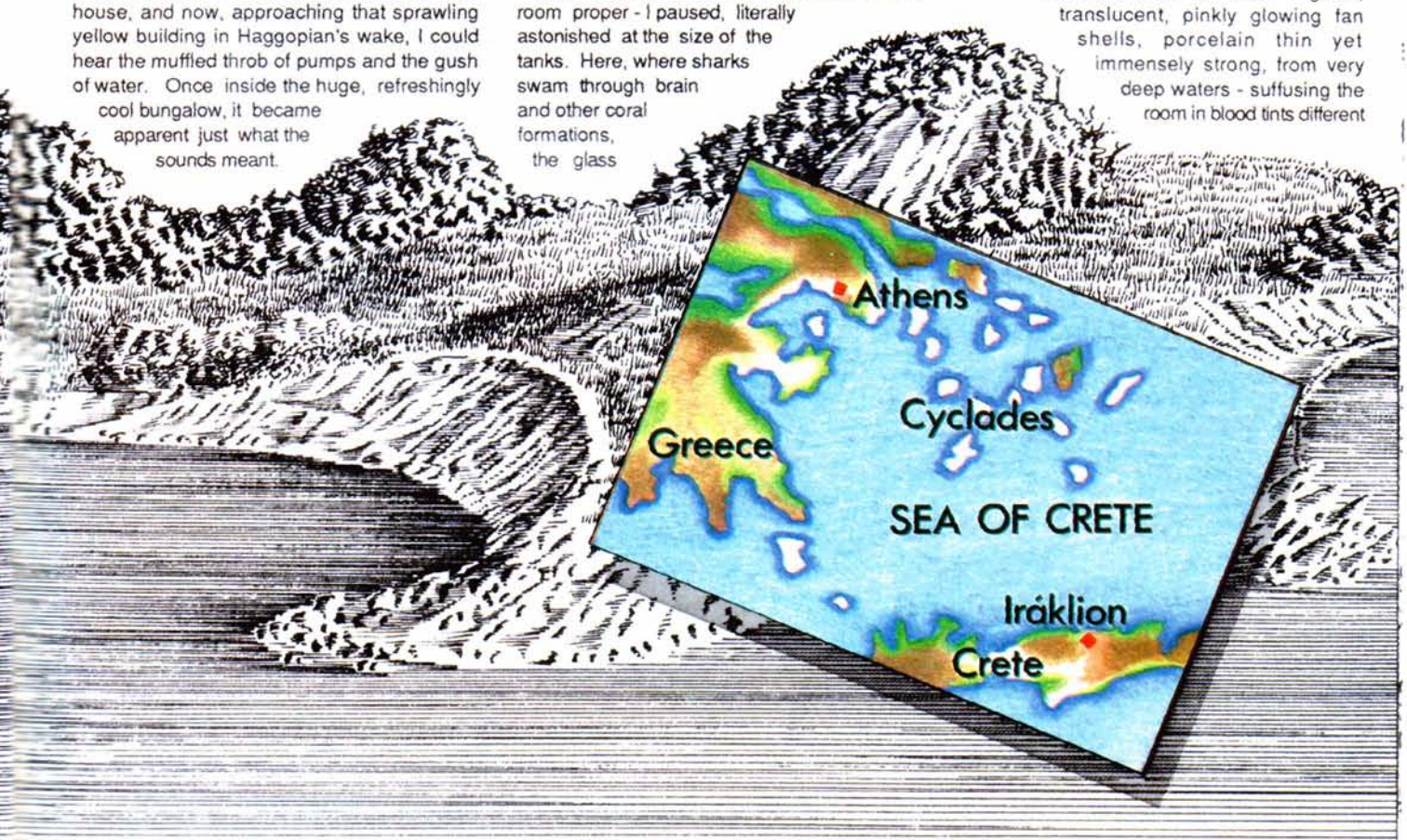
"Given time," Haggopian gratingly commented, "it would do the same to you!"

In the largest room of all - more a hall than a room proper - I paused, literally astonished at the size of the tanks. Here, where sharks swam through brain and other coral formations, the glass of these miniature oceans must have been very thick. Backdrops had been arranged to give the impression of vastly sprawling submarine vistas.

In one tank hammerheads of over two metres in length were cruising slowly from side to side, ugly as hell and looking twice as dangerous. Metal steps led up to and over this tank's rim, then down the other side and into the water itself. Haggopian must have seen the puzzled expression on my face, for he said, "This is where I used to feed my Lampreys - they had to be handled carefully. I no longer have them; I returned the last of my specimens to the sea three years ago."

Three years ago? I peered closer into the tank as one of the hammerheads slid his belly along the glass. There on the white and silver underside of the fish, between the gill slits and down the belly, numerous patches of raw red showed, many of them forming clearly defined circles where close-packed scales had been recently removed and the sucker-like mouths of lampreys had been at work. No, Haggopian's "three years" had no doubt been a slip of the tongue - three days, more like!

I stopped pondering my host's mistake as we passed into another room whose specimens must surely have delighted any conchologist. Again tanks lined the walls, smaller than the others I had so far seen but marvelously laid out to duplicate perfectly the natural environs of their inhabitants. And these were the living gems of every ocean on earth; great conchs and clams from the South Pacific; tiny, beautifully marked cowries from the Great Barrier Reef; hundreds of weird uni- and bi-valves of every shape and size. Even the windows were of shell - great, translucent, pinkly glowing fan shells, porcelain thin yet immensely strong, from very deep waters - suffusing the room in blood tints different



again from the submarine dappling of the previous rooms.

Once more Haggopian showed off his expertise, casually naming any specimens I paused to study and briefly describing their habits and the foreign deeps to which they belonged.

My tour was interrupted here when Costas, the Greek who had brought me from Kletnos, entered this fascinating room to murmur something of obvious importance to his employer. Haggopian nodded his head in agreement, and Costas left, returning a few moments later with half a dozen other Greeks, who each had a few words with Haggopian before departing. Eventually we were alone again.

"They were my men," he told me, "some of them for almost twenty years, but now I have no further need of them. I have paid them their last wages, they have said their last farewells, and now they are going away. Costas will take them to Kletnos and return later for you. By then I should have finished my story."

"I don't quite follow you, Mr. Haggopian. You mean you're going into seclusion here? What you said just then sounded ominously final."

"Seclusion? Here? No, Mr. Belton - but final, yes! I have learned as much of the sea as I can from here; my education is almost complete."

He saw the puzzled look on my face and smiled a wry smile. "You are at pains to understand me, and that is hardly surprising. Few men, if any, have known my circumstances before, of that I am reasonably certain. That is why I have chosen to speak now. You are fortunate in that you caught me at the right time; I would never have taken it upon myself to tell my story had I not been so persistently pursued - there are horrors best unknown - but perhaps the telling will serve as a warning. It gives me pause, the number of students devoted to the lore of the sea who would emulate my works and discoveries." He frowned, pausing for a moment. "Tomorrow, when the island is deserted, Costas will return and set all the living specimens loose. There are means here by which even the largest fishes might be returned to the sea. Then Haggopiana will be truly empty."

"But to what end?" I asked. And where do you intend to go? Surely this island is your base, your home and stronghold? It was here you wrote your wonderful books, and -"

"My base and stronghold, as you put it, yes!" He harshly cut me off. "The island has been these things to me, Mr. Belton, but my home? No longer! When your interview is over, I shall walk to the top of the rocks and look once more at Kletnos, the closest land mass of any reasonable size. Then I will take my *Echinoidea* and guide her out through the Kasos Straights on a direct and deliberate course until her fuel runs out. There can be no turning back. There is a place unsuspected in the Mediterranean, where the sea is so deep and cool, and where -"

He broke off and turned his glistening face to me. "But there, at this rate the tale will never be told. Suffice to say that the last trip of the *Echinoidea* will be to the bottom - and that I shall be with her."

"Suicide?" I gasped, barely able to keep up with Haggopian's revelations. "You intend to – drown yourself?"

At that he laughed, a rasping cough of a laugh that jarred like chalk on a blackboard. "Drown myself? Is a watery grave so distasteful then?" He laughed again.

For a few moments I stared at him in dumb amazement and concern, uncertain as to whether I stood in the presence of a sane man or...

He gazed at me intently through the dark lenses of his glasses and under the scrutiny of those unseen eyes I slowly shook my head, backing off a step.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Haggopian, I just..."

"Unpardonable," he rasped as I struggled for words, "my behaviour is unpardonable. Come, Mr. Belton, perhaps we can be comfortable out here." He led me through a doorway and out onto a patio surrounded by lemon and pomegranate trees. A white garden table and two cane chairs stood in the shade. Haggopian clapped his hands together once, sharply, then offered me a chair before seating himself opposite. Again I noticed that the man's movements seemed oddly awkward.

An old woman, wrapped around Indian-fashion in white silk and with the lower half of her face veiled in a shawl that fell back over her shoulders, answered the Armenian's summons. He spoke a few guttural but gentle words to her in Greek. She went, stumbling a little with her years, to return shortly with a tray, two glasses, and (amazingly) an English beer with the chill still on the bottle.

I saw that Haggopian's glass was already filled, but with no drink I could readily recognize. The liquid was greenly cloudy - sediment literally swam in his glass - and yet the Armenian did not seem to notice. He touched glasses with me before lifting the stuff to his lips and drinking deeply. I too took a deep draft, for I was very dry, but when I had placed my glass back on the table I saw that Haggopian was still drinking! He completely drained off the murky, unknown liquid, put down the glass and again clapped his hands in summons.

At this point I found myself wondering why the man did not remove his sunglasses. After all, we were in the shade, had been even more so during my tour of his wonderful aquarium. A glance at the Armenian's face served to remind me that he must suffer from some allergy, for again I saw those thin trickles of liquid flowing down from the enigmatic lenses.

The silence was broken when the old woman came back with a further glass of murky fluid for her master. He spoke a few more words to her before she once more left us. I could not help but notice, though, as she bent over the table, how very dehydrated the woman's face looked, with pinched nostrils, deeply wrinkled skin, and dull eyes sunk deep beneath the bony ridges of her eyebrows. An island peasant woman, obviously. She seemed to find a peculiar magnetism in Haggopian, leaning towards him noticeably, visibly fighting to control an apparent desire to *touch* him whenever she came near him.

"She will leave with you when you go. Costas will take care of her."

"Was I staring?" I guiltily started, aware suddenly of an odd feeling of unreality and discontinuity. "I'm sorry - I didn't intend to be rude."

"No matter - what I have to tell you makes nonsense of all matters of sensibility. You strike me as a man not easily...*frightened*, Mr. Belton?"

"I can be surprised, Mr. Haggopian, and shocked - But frightened? Well, among other things I have been a war correspondent for some time, and -"

"Off course, I understand - but there are worse things than the man-made horrors of war."

"That may be, but I'm a journalist. It's my job. I'll take a chance on being - frightened."

"Good! And please put aside any doubts you may by now have conceived in regards to my sanity, or any you may yet conceive during the telling of my story."

I started to protest but he quickly cut me off. "No, no, Mr. Belton! You would have to be totally insensible not to have perceived the - strangeness here."

He fell silent as for the third time the old woman appeared, placing a pitcher before him on the table. This time she almost fawned on him, and he jerked away from her, nearly upsetting his chair. He rasped a few harsh words in Greek, and I heard the strange, shriveled creature sob as she turned to stumble away.

"What on earth is *wrong* with the woman?"

"In good time, Mr. Belton," he held up his hand, "all in good time." Again he drained his glass, refilling it from the pitcher before commencing his tale proper, a tale through which I sat for the most part silent, later

hypnotized, and eventually horrified to the end.

"My first ten years of life spent in the Cook Islands, and the next five in Cyprus," Haggopian began, "always within shouting distance of the sea. My father died when I was sixteen, and though he had never acknowledged me in his lifetime, he willed to me the equivalent of two and one half millions of pounds sterling. When I was twenty-one, I came into this money and found that I could now devote myself utterly to the ocean - my one real love in life. By that I mean *all* oceans, all great waters...

"At the end of the war I bought Haggopiana and began to build my collection here. I wrote about my work, and I was twenty-nine years old when I finished *The Cradle Sea*. It was my success with that book - I used to enjoy success - and with *The Sea: A New Frontier* which prompted me to commence work upon *Denizens of the Deep*. I had been married to my first wife for five years by the time I had the first rough manuscript of my work ready, and I could have published the book there and then but for the fact that I had become something of a perfectionist both in my writing and in my studies. In short, there were passages in the manuscript, whole chapters on certain species, with which I was not satisfied.

"One of these chapters was devoted to the Sirenians. The Manatee in particular had fascinated me for a long time, in respect of its undeniable connections with the mermaid and siren legends of old renown; from which, of course, the order takes its name. However, it was more than merely this initially that took me off on my 'Manatee Survey,' as I called those voyages, though at that time I could never have guessed at the importance of my quest. As it happened, my inquiries were to lead me to the first real pointer to my future - a frightful hint of my destination, though of course I never recognised it as such." He paused.

"Destination?" I felt obliged to fill in the silence. "Literary or scientific?"

"My *ultimate* destination."

"Oh."

I sat and waited, not quite knowing what to say, an odd position for a journalist. After a moment Haggopian continued, and as he spoke I could feel his eyes staring at me intently through the opaque lenses.

"You are aware of the theories of continental drift - those concepts originating in Wegener and Lintz, modified by Vane, Matthews and others - which have it that the continents are gradually floating apart and that they were once much closer to one another? Such theories are sound, I assure you. Primal Pangaea did exist, trodden by feet other than those of men. Indeed, that first great continent knew life before man first swung down from the trees and up from the apes.

"But at any rate, it was partly to further the work of Wegener and the others that I decided upon my 'Manatee Survey' - a comparison of the manatees of Liberia, Senegal and the Gulf of Guinea with those of the Carribean and the Gulf of Mexico. You see, Mr. Belton, of all the shores of Earth these two are the only coastal stretches where manatees occur in their natural state; excellent zoological evidence for continental drift.

"Well, I eventually found myself in Jacksonville on the East Coast of North America, which is just about as far North as the manatee may be found in any numbers. In Jacksonville, by chance, I heard of certain strange stones taken out of the sea - stones bearing weathered hieroglyphs of fantastic antiquity, presumably washed ashore by the back currents of the Gulf Stream. Such was my interest in these stones and their possible source - you may recall that Mu, Atlantis and other mythical sunken lands and cities have long been favourite themes of mine - that I quickly concluded my 'Manatee Survey' to sail to Boston, Massachusetts, where I had heard a collection of such oddities were kept in a private museum. There, when I saw those ancient stones bearing evidence of primal intelligence, I knew that I had conclusive proof of the floating-continents theories. *For I had known traces of that same intelligence in places as far apart as the Ivory Coast and the Islands of Polynesia!"*

For some time Haggopian had been showing a strange and increasing agitation, and now he sat wringing his hands and moving restlessly in his chair. "Ah, yes, Mr. Belton - was it not a discovery? For as soon as I saw those basalt fragments I *recognised* them! They were small, those pieces, yes, but the inscriptions upon them were the same as I had seen cut in the great black pillars of Geph in the coastal jungles of Liberia - pillars long uncovered by the sea and about which, on moonlit nights, the natives cavorted and chanted ancient liturgies. I had known those liturgies, too, Belton, from my childhood in the Cook Islands - *Ia-R'lyeh! Cthulhu fhtagn!"*

With this last thoroughly alien gibberish fluting weirdly from his lips the Armenian had risen suddenly to his feet, his head aggressively forward and his knuckles white as they pressed down on the table. Then, seeing the look on my face as I quickly leaned backwards away from him, he slowly relaxed and finally fell back into his seat as though exhausted. He let his hands hang limp and turned his face to one side.

For at least three minutes Haggopian sat like this before turning to me with the merest half-apologetic shrug of his shoulders. "You - you must excuse me, sir. I find myself very easily given these days to over-excitement."

He took up his glass and drank, then dabbed again at the rivulets of liquid from his eyes before continuing. "But I digress; mainly I wished to point out that once, long ago, the Americas and Africa were Siamese twins, joined at their middle by a lowland strip which sank as the continental drift began. There were cities in those lowlands, do you see? And the evidence of those prehistoric places still exists at the points where once the two masses co-joined. As for Polynesia, well, suffice to say that the beings who built the ancient cities - beings who seeped down from the stars over inchoate eons - once held dominion over all the world. But they left other traces, those beings, queer gods and cults and even stranger - residua.

"However, quite apart from these vastly interesting geological discoveries, I had, too, something of a *genealogical* interest in New England. My mother was Polynesian, you know, but she had old New England blood in her too. My great-great-grandmother was taken from the islands to New England by a deck hand on one of the old East India sailing ships in the late 1820s, and two generations later my grandmother returned to Polynesia after her American husband died in a fire. Until then the line had lived in Innsmouth, a decaying New England seaport of ill repute, where Polynesian women were anything but rare. My grandmother was pregnant when she returned to the islands, and the American blood came out strongly in my mother.

"I mention all this because... because I cannot help but wonder if something in my genealogical background has to do with...

"You see, I had heard many strange tales in Polynesia as a child - tales of *things* that come up out of the sea to mate with men, and of their terrible progeny!"

For the second time a feverish excitement made itself apparent in Haggopian's voice and attitude; and again his agitation showed as his whole body trembled, seemingly in the grip of massive, barely repressed emotions.

"*Ia-R'lyeh!*" he suddenly burst out again in that unknown tongue. "What monstrous things lurk even now in the ocean deeps, Belton, and what other things *return* to that cradle of earthly life?"

Abruptly he stood up to begin pacing the patio in the swaying, clumsy lope, mumbling gutturally and incoherently to himself and casting occasional glances in my direction where I sat, very disturbed now by his obviously aberrant mental condition, at the table.

At that distinct moment in time, had there been any easy means of escape, I believe I might quite happily have given up all to be off Haggopiana. I could see no such escape, however, and so I nervously waited until the Armenian had calmed himself sufficiently to resume his seat. Again moisture was seeping in a slow trickle from behind the dark lenses, and once more he drank of the unknown liquid in his glass before continuing.

"Once more I ask you to accept my apologies,Mr. Belton, and I crave your pardon for straying so wildly from the principal facts. I was speaking before of my book, *Denizens of the Deep*, and of my dissatisfaction with certain chapters. Well, when finally my interest in New England's shores and mysteries waned, I returned to that book and especially to a chapter concerning ocean parasites. I wanted to compare this specific branch of the sea's creatures with its land-going counterpart and to introduce, as I had in my other chapters, oceanic myths and legends that I might attempt to explain them away.

"Of course, I was limited by the fact that the sea cannot boast so large a number of parasitic or symbiotic creatures as the land. Nonetheless, I dealt with the hagfish and lamprey, with certain species of fish leech, whale lice and clinging weeds, and I compared them with fresh-water leeches, types of tapeworm, fungi and so on. Now, you might be tempted to believe that there is too great a difference between sea and land dwellers, and of course there is - but when one considers that all life as we know it sprang originally from the sea...?

"But to continue, in 1956 I was exploring the oceans of the Solomon Islands in a yacht with a crew of seven. We had moored for the night on a beautiful uninhabited little island off San Cristobal, and the next morning, as my men were decamping and preparing the yacht for sea, I walked along the beach looking for conchs. Stranded in a pool by the tide I saw a great shark, its gills barely in the water and its rough back and dorsal actually breaking the surface. I felt sorry for the creature, and even more so when I saw that it had fastened to its belly one of those very bloodsuckers with which I was still concerned. Not only that, but the hagfish was a beauty! Four feet long if it was an inch and definitely of a type I had never seen before. By that time *Denizens of the Deep* was almost ready, and but for that chapter I have already mentioned the book would have been at the printers long since.

"Well I could not waste the time it would take to tow the shark to deeper waters, but

nonetheless I pitied the great fish. I had one of my men put it out of its misery with a rifle. Goodness knows how long the parasite had fed on its juices, gradually weakening it until it had become merely a toy of the tides.

"As for the hagfish - he was to come with us. Aboard my yacht I had plenty of tanks to take bigger fish than him, and of course I wanted to study him and include a mention of him in my book.

"My men managed to net the strange fish without too much trouble and took it aboard, but they seemed to be having some difficulty getting it back out of the net and into one of the sunken tanks. I went over to give a hand before the fish expired, and just as it seemed we were sorting the tangle out, the creature began thrashing about. It came out of the net with one great flexing of its body - and took me with it into the tank!

"My men laughed at first, naturally, and I would have laughed with them - *if that awful fish had not in an instant fastened itself on my body, its suction pad mouth grinding high up on my chest and its eyes boring horribly into mine!*"

After a short pause, during which Haggopian's face worked hideously, he continued.

"I was delirious for three weeks after they dragged me out of the tank. Shock? - poison? I did not know at the time. Now I know, but it is too late; possibly it was too late even then.

"My wife was with us as cook, and during my delirium, as I feverishly tossed and turned in my cabin bed, she tended me. Meanwhile my men kept the hagfish - a previously unknown species of *Myxinoidea* - well supplied with small sharks and other fish. They never allowed the cyclostome to completely drain any of its hosts, you understand, but they knew enough to keep the creature healthy for me no matter its loathsome manner of taking nourishment.

"My recovery, I remember, was plagued by recurrent dreams of monolithic submarine cities, Cyclopean structures of basaltic stone peopled by strange hybrid beings, part human, part fish and part batrachian; the amphibious Deep Ones, minions of Dagon and worshippers of dreaming Cthulhu. In these dreams, too, eerie voices called out to me and whispered things of my forebears - things which made me scream through my fever at the hearing.

"After I recovered, the times were many I went below decks to study the hagfish through the glass slides of its tank. Have you ever seen a hagfish or lamprey close up, Mr. Belton? No? Then consider yourself lucky. They are ugly creatures, with looks to match their natures, eellike and primitive - and their mouths, Belton - their horrible, rasplike, sucking mouths!

"Two months later, toward the end of the voyage, the horror really began. By then my wounds, the raw places on my chest where the thing had had me, were healed completely; but the memory of that first encounter was still terribly fresh in my mind, and -

"I see the question written on your face, Mr. Belton, but indeed you heard me correctly - I did say my *first* encounter. Oh, yes - there were more encounters to come."

At this point in his remarkable narrative, Haggopian paused once more to dab at the rivulets of moisture seeping from behind his sunglasses and to drink yet again from the cloudy liquid in his glass. It gave me a chance to look about me; I still sought an immediate escape route should such become necessary.

The Armenian was seated with his back to the great bungalow, and as I glanced nervously in that direction, I saw a face move quickly out of sight in one of the smaller porthole windows. Later, as Haggopian's story progressed, I was able to see that the face in the window belonged to the old servant woman and that her eyes were fixed firmly upon him in a kind of hungry fascination. Whenever she caught me looking at her, she withdrew.

"No," Haggopian finally went on, "the hagfish was far from finished with me - far from it. For as the weeks went by, my interest in the creature grew into a sort of obsession, so that every spare moment found me staring into its tank or examining the curious marks and scars it left on the bodies of its unwilling hosts. And so it was that I discovered how those hosts were *not* unwilling. A peculiar fact, and yet -

"Yes, I found that having once played host to the cyclostome, the fishes it fed upon were ever eager to resume such *liaisons*, even unto death! When I first discovered this odd circumstance, I experimented, and I was later able to establish quite definitely that following the initial violation, the hosts of the hagfish submitted to subsequent attacks with a kind of soporific pleasure.

"Apparently, Mr. Belton, I had found in the sea the perfect parallel of the vampire of land-based legend. Just what this meant, the utter horror of my discovery, did not dawn on me until - until -

"We were moored of Limassol in Cyprus prior to starting on the very last leg of our trip, the voyage back to Haggopiana. I had allowed the crew - all but one man, Costas, who had no desire to leave the yacht - ashore for a night out. My wife, too, had gone to visit friends in Famagusta. Myself, I was happy enough to stay aboard; I had known a tired feeling, a lethargy, for a number of days.

"I went to bed early. From my cabin I could see the lights of the town and hear the gentle lap of water about the legs of the pier at which we were moored. Costas was drowsing aft with a fishing line dangling in the water. Before I dropped off to sleep I called out to him. He answered, in a sleepy sort of way, to say that there was hardly a ripple on the sea and that already he had pulled in two fine mullets...

"When I regained consciousness, it was three weeks later, and I was back here on Haggopiana. The hagfish had had me again. They told me how Costas had heard the splash and found me in the cyclostome's tank. He had managed to get me out of the water before I drowned, but had needed to fight like the very devil to get the monster off me - or rather, *to get me off the monster!*

"Do the implications begin to show, Mr. Belton?

"You see this?" He unbuttoned his shirt to show me the marks on his chest - circular scars of about three inches in diameter, like those I had seen on the hammerheads - and I stiffened in my chair, my mouth falling open in shock as I saw their great number. Down to the silk cummerbund just below his rib cage he unbuttoned his shirt, and barely an inch of his skin remained unblemished; some of the scars even overlapped.

"Good God!" I finally gasped.

"Which God?" Haggopian instantly rasped across the table, his fingers trembling again in that strange passion. "Which God, Mr. Belton? Jehovah or Oannes - the Man-Christ or the Toad-Thing - God of Earth, Air or Water? *Ia-R'lyeh, Cthulhu fhtagn, Yibb-Tstll, na Yot-Sottot!* I know many gods, sir!"

Again, jerkily, he filled his glass from the pitcher, literally gulping at the sediment-loaded stuff until I thought he must choke. When finally he put down his empty glass, I could see that he had himself once more under a semblance of control.

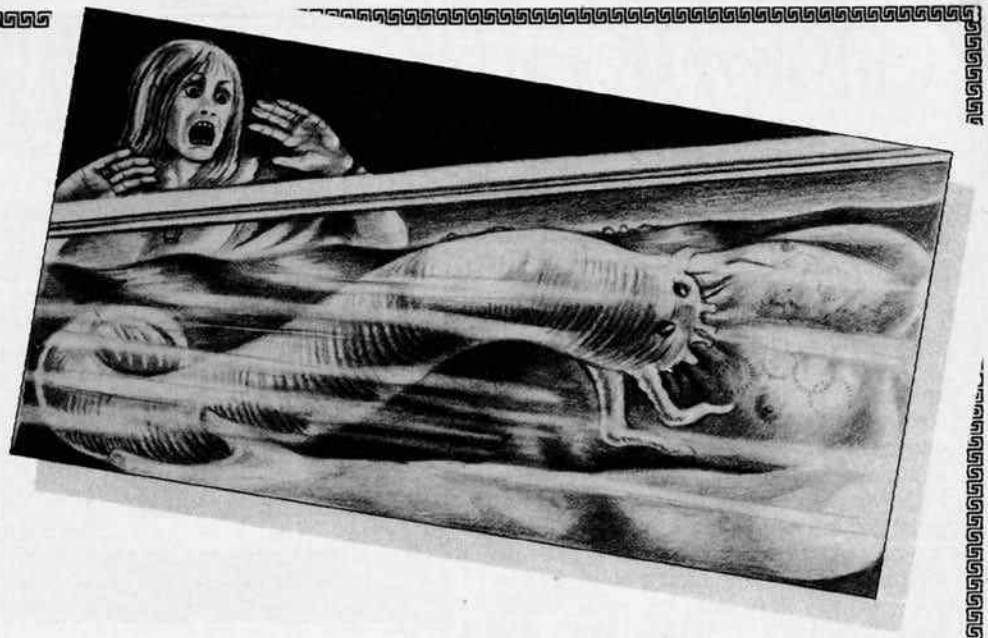
"That second time," he continued, "everyone believed I had fallen into the tank in my sleep, and this was by no means a wild stretch of the imagination; as a boy I had been something of a somnambulist. At first even I believed it was so, for at that time I was still blind to the creature's power over me. They say that the hagfish is blind, too, Mr. Belton, and members of the better known species certainly are - but *my* hag was not blind. Indeed, primitive or not, I believe that after the first three or four times he was actually able to recognize me! I used to keep the creature in the tank where you saw the hammerheads, forbidding anyone else entry to that room. I would pay my visits at night, whenever the - mood - came on me; and he would be there, waiting for me, with his ugly mouth groping at the glass and his queer eyes peering out in awful anticipation. He would go straight to the steps as soon as I began to climb them, waiting for me restlessly in the water until I joined him there. I would wear a snorkel, so as to be able to breathe while he... while it -"

Haggopian was trembling all over now and dabbing angrily at his face with his silk handkerchief. Glad of the chance to take my eyes off the man's oddly glistening features, I finished off my drink and refilled my glass with the remainder of the beer in the bottle. The chill was long off the beer by then. The drink had gone flat. I drank solely to relieve my mouth of its clammy dryness.

"The worst of it was," he went on after a while, "that what was happening to me was not against my will. As with the sharks and other host fish, so with me. I enjoyed each hiddeous liaison as the alcoholic enjoys the euphoria of his whiskey; as the drug addict delights in his delusions; and the results of my addiction were no less destructive! I experienced no more periods of delirium, such as I had known during my first two 'sessions' with the creature, but I could feel that my strength was slowly but surely being sapped. My assistants knew that I was ill, naturally - they would have had to be stupid not to notice the way my health was deteriorating or the rapidity with which I appeared to be aging - but it was my wife who suffered the most.

"I could have little to do with her, do you see? If we had led any sort of normal life, then she must surely have seen the marks on my body. That would have required an explanation, one I was not willing - indeed, unable - to give. Oh, but I waxed cunning in my addiction, and no one guessed the truth behind the strange 'disease' which was slowly killing me, draining me of my life's blood.

"A little over a year later, in 1958, when I knew I was on death's very doorstep; I allowed myself to be talked into undertaking another voyage. My wife loved me deeply still and believed a prolonged trip might do me good. I think that Costas had begun to suspect the truth by then; I even caught him one day in the forbidden room, staring curiously at the cyclostome in its tank. His suspicions were obvious when I told him that the creature was to go with us. He was against the idea from the start. I argued that my studies were incomplete, that I was not finished with the hag and that eventually I intended to release the fish at sea. I intended no such thing. In fact, I



did not believe I would last the voyage out. From fifteen stone in weight I was down to nine.

"We were anchored off the Great Barrier Reef the night my wife found me with the hagfish. The others were asleep after a birthday party aboard. I had insisted that they all drink and make merry so that I could be sure not to be disturbed, but my wife had taken very little to drink, and I had not noticed. The first thing I knew of it was when I saw her standing at the side of the tank, looking down at me and the ...*thing*! I will always remember her face, the horror and awful *knowledge* written upon it, and her scream, the way it split the night!

"By the time I got out of the tank she was gone. She had fallen or thrown herself overboard. Her scream had roused the crew, and Costas was the first to be up and about. He saw me before I could cover myself. I took three men and went out in a little boat to look for my wife. When we got back, Costas had finished off the hagfish. He had taken a great hook and gaffed the thing to death. Its head was little more than a bloody pulp, but even in death its suctorial mouth continued to rasp away - at nothing!

"After that, for a whole month, I would have Costas nowhere near me. I do not think he wanted to be near me - I believe he knew my grief was not solely for my poor wife...

"Well that was the end of the first phase, Mr. Belton. I rapidly regained my weight and health, the years fell off my face and body, until I was almost the same man I had Been. I say 'almost,' for of course I could never be exactly the same. For one thing I had lost all my hair - as I have said, the creature had depleated me so thoroughly I had been on death's very doorstep - and also, to remind me of the horror, there were the scars on my body and a greater scar on my mind. The look on my wife's face when last I had seen her.

"During the next year I finished my book, mentioning nothing of my discoveries during the course of my 'Manatee Survey,' nothing of my experience with the awful fish. I dedicated the book to the memory of my poor wife, but yet another year was to pass before I could get the episode of the hagfish completely out of my system. From then on I could not bear even to think back on my terrible obsession.

"It was shortly after I married for the second time that phase two began...

"For some time I had been experiencing a strange pain in my abdomen, between my navel and the bottom of my rib cage , but had not troubled myself to report it to a doctor. I have an abhorrence of doctors. Within six months of the wedding the pain had disappeared - to be replaced by something far worse.

"Knowing my terror of medical men, my new wife kept my secret, and though we neither of us knew it, that was the worst thing we could have done. Perhaps if I had seen about the thing sooner -

"You see, Mr. Belton, I had developed - yes, an organ! An appendage, a snoutlike thing had grown out of my stomach, with a tiny hole at its end like a second navel! Eventually, of course, I was obliged to see a doctor, and after he examined me and told me the worst, I swore him - or rather, I paid him - to secrecy. The organ could not be removed, he said, it was part of me. It had its own blood vessels, a major artery and connections with my lungs and stomach. It was not malignant in the sense of a morbid tumor. Other than this he was unable to explain the snoutlike thing away. After an exhaustive series of tests, though, he was further able to say that my blood, too, had undergone a change. There seemed to be far too much salt in my system. The doctor told me then that by all rights I ought not to be alive.

"Nor did it stop there, Mr. Belton, for soon other changes started to take place - this time in the snoutlike organ itself - when that tiny navel at its tip began to open up!

"And then... and then... my poor wife... *and my eyes*!"

Once more Haggopian had to stop. He sat there gulping like - *like a fish out of water!* - with his whole body trembling violently and the thin streams of moisture trickling down his face. Again he filled his glass and drank deeply of the filthy liquid; once more he wiped at his ghastly face. My own thoughts had gone very dry again, and even if I had anything to say, I do not believe I could have managed it.

"I - it seems - you -" the Armenian half gulped, half rasped, then gave a weird, harshly choking bark before finally settling himself to finishing his unholy narrative. Now his voice was less human than any voice I had ever heard before:

"You - have - more nerve than I thought, Mr. Belton, and - you were right: you are not easily shocked or frightened. In the end it is I who am the coward, for I can not tell the rest of the tale. I can only - *show you*, and then you must leave. You can wait for Costas at the pier..."

With that Haggopian slowly stood up and peeled off his open shirt. Hypnotized, I watched as he began to unwind the silken cummerbund at his waist, watched as his - organ - came into view, as it blindly groped in the light like the snout of a rooting pig! But the thing was not a snout.

Its end was an open, gasping mouth - red and loathsome, with rows of rasplike teeth - and in its sides breathing gill slits showed, moving in and out as the thing sucked at thin air!

Even then the horror was not at an end, for as I lurched reelingly to my feet, the Armenian took off those hellish sunglasses. For the first time I saw his eyes: *his bulging fish eyes - without whites, like jet marbles, oozing painful tears in the constant ache of an alien environment - eyes adapted for the murk of the deeps!*

I remember how, as I fled blindly down the beach to the pier, Haggopian's last words rang in my ears; the words he rasped as he threw down the cummerbund and removed the dark-lensed sunglasses from his face: "Do not pity me, Mr. Belton," he had said, "the sea was ever my first love, and there is much I do not know of her even now - but I will, I will. And I shall not be alone of my kind among the Deep Ones. There is one I know who awaits me even now, and one other yet to come!"

On the short trip back to Kletnos, numb though my mind ought to have been, the journalist in me took over, and I thought back to Haggopian's hellish story and its equally hellish implications. I thought of his great love of the ocean, of the strangely cloudy liquid with which he so obviously sustained himself, and of the thin film of protective slime which glistened on his face and presumably covered the rest of his body. I thought of his weird forebears and the exotic gods they had worshipped, of "things that came up out of the sea to mate with men!" I thought of the fresh marks I had seen on the undersides of the sharks in the great tank, marks made by no ordinary parasite, for Haggopian had returned his lampreys to the sea all of three years earlier; and I thought of that second wife who, rumour had it, died of some "exotic wasting disease." Finally, I thought of those other rumours I had heard of his *third* wife; how she was no longer living with him - but of the latter it was not until we docked at Kletnos proper that I learned how those rumours, understandable as the mistake was, were in fact mistaken.

For it was then, as the faithful Costas helped the old woman from the boat, that she stepped on her trailing shawl. That shawl and her veil were one and the same garment, so that her clumsiness caused a momentary exposure of her face, neck and one shoulder to a point just above her left breast. In that same instant of inadvertent unveiling, I saw the woman's face for the first time - and also the livid scars where they began just beneath her collarbone.

At last I understood the strange magnetism Haggopian had held for her, that magnetism not unlike the unholy attraction between the morbid hagfish of this story and its all too willing hosts. I understood, too, my previous interest in her dehydrated face, which yet had classic features - for now I could see that it was the face of a certain Athenian model lately of note! Haggopian's third wife, wed to him on her eighteenth birthday. And then, as my whirling thoughts flashed back yet again to that second wife, "buried at sea," I knew finally, cataclysmically what the Armenian had meant when he had said: "There is one who awaits me even now, and one other yet to come!"

'WHAT IS PLAY BY MAIL?'

by Wayne Bootleg

COMPUTERISED GM'S V HUMAN GM'S:

I must admit that I do not particularly like computer moderated games (CMGs) as I feel that you lose a lot of personal control over the characters, you are limited to a set course of actions and if you make a single mistake in your orders, you could find yourself in great difficulty. However despite my criticism there is a great public demand for c.m.g's and they are one of the fastest areas of growth on the pbm market. The nature of the games you can play vary from the sci-fi aspect eg. **"Capitol"**, **"Starglobe"** and **"Earthwood"**. There are also semi-computerised games that cater for D&D type armies eg. **"Midguard"** and **"Kings of Steel"**. The latter two games are also partly human moderated games (HMGs) as you cannot really fully computerise these type of games; several companies have tried and failed.

You play these games by sending coded orders which represent a set course of actions to the computer and it will compare these to the info which is held in its data banks and then print out a prescribed answer. In the main, your orders have to be sent in a set sequence or your turn will not be actioned. Whilst the replies you get can answer complex and technical problems, like 200 starships fighting it out for control of the galaxy, the response it gives you is put in quite a cold and impersonal manner i.e. "You lost 75 battleships in the battle that took place this round." On the whole the rulebooks tend to be quite frightening, dull, as well as complex, but all the games mentioned above have many satisfied customers; one in particular delights in playing a **Ronnie Reagan** type character in one game by building up his nuclear arms stockpile and then dropping them on anyone who does the same!!

However there is a frightening trend being set by PBM companies which I find quite sinister: What happens is that a company will start off by promoting a HMG: If it is successful, they will invest their profits on a computer and buy a CMG, which is usually imported from the U.S.A. as CMGs are a very big hit with our American cousins, and push that game through their HMG via newsletters, meets and the like. They then put the staff they had running the HMG into the CMG and of course the former games deteriorate; less time is devoted to them, the quality suffers, the response time to get your turn back increases and the HMG gets wound down to such an extent that people start dropping out of the game altogether. You may well ask me why PBM companies are doing this and the answer, unfortunately, is quite often PROFIT!!

You see if you employ a GM and pay that person £65 per week to run a HMG, the maximum manual written turns that can be completed per week is

approximately 100. If the company charges £1.50 per turn, the amount of income the GM generates in a week is £150. However, if that same person is put to work inputting data into a CMG, the turns processed in a week can be anything up to 500 and at a reduced price of £1 per turn, the amount the GM generates is £500, quite a difference in profit margin you will agree!! It is about time certain companies came clean and stopped giving lame excuses to HMG players, who are sometimes getting a raw deal. In defence, of course, computers can handle a far greater deal of numbers far more accurately, despite this being a mechanised, impersonal approach.

Anyway, I'll get off my soap box and get on with this months review.

'It's a crime' is a fully CMG in which you play the part of a gangleader who controls a group of misguided youths (a la ***The warriors*** from the film of the same name), which is one of 500 gangs inhabiting New York City in the late 1990's. New York has deteriorated, the police are severely undermanned and your main objective is to become one of the most rich, famous and powerful gangs by increasing the area you control (your 'turf'). When you have done this you attract the attentions of the *Mafia*, become a Mafia boss and then, under a different set of rules, you aim to become *The Godfather*. This is achieved by mugging people, selling drugs, arson, armed robbery, murder and ambushing other gangs. As you can see, this game is not one for people who are easily offended or have certain moral objections.

I was attracted to this game for three main reasons: I like the aim of the game, the cost (62.5pence per turn) and the first couple of rounds were free!! When I received the rule book, I was glad to see that it was well written in an easy to read style, the rules were simple and mapping was easy, so I filled in my round sheet, sent it off and a few weeks later my first turn was returned to me. The first thing that struck me was that the round sheet was 2'8" in length. However that was nothing, as some weeks later when I had received round fifteen my turn had grown to 4'1". God knows the length it will be when I get to turn 75 and how I'll file it away!! The second thing that hit me was that all my actions worked!! This was soon to change in later rounds however, as quite a few of my actions failed and I lost men, money and notoriety.

So there I was playing the game, thinking I had done pretty well for myself by gaining some notoriety points by controlling a couple of blocks, pulling off a few robberies and pushing some drugs. Then the "Most Notorious Gangs" table came out. I was nowhere to be seen on it and even worse, the gang occupying number one had at least ten times the notoriety points I had. What had I done wrong? After looking through the rule book, the answer was clear. At the beginning of turn three you may issue six more additional orders than the four you are usually allowed to issue, but this cost you another 62.5pence. In addition to this you may send a make up turn once every three weeks or if your turn is processed late. This cost another 62.5pence for four actions, £1.25 for ten. So people had sometimes been sending in two 10-action turns per week, costing them a grand total of £2.50!!

I am still playing **"It's a Crime"** as it's quick, easy to play and despite some very similar computer comments, entertaining, but I have given up all chance of winning or getting in the top 100 gangs. I have now settled back, content to pay my 62.5pence per turn and I leave the people who can afford it to become the winners. One final point is that if anyone who plays the game long enough to eventually become a Mafia boss could let me know the conditions they have to satisfy, it would solve a great mystery, as nobody as far as I know, knows them. Don't just take my word on the game though, as through an arrangement with **K.J.C. Games** you too can have two free turns with 'It's a Crime'. Just write to them at :-

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Mention the **'Adventurer'** Offer and you will receive a set up package.

If you wish to receive any more info on the other games mentioned, or if you are involved in a PBM game and there's something you think I should know about, drop me a line C/O **Adventurer.**

Next month , I will be looking at tribal PBM games, including Crassimoff's World, Soccer Star and Arcadia.

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VOYAGES BEYOND

by Wendy Graham

Autumn seems to be a busy time for science fiction. There are more conventions per square week-end than at any other time of year, good old **Aunty Beeb's** thoughts turn to transmissions of the stalwarts of the genre and publishing houses spew forth a seasonal cornucopea of the more than half way decent.

To take that last point first, most mornings clunk to the sound of a review copy of an SF or fantasy book through the letter box (if you're lucky - if you're unlucky the parcel is so big that the postman has to knock, and twice with me, as the nights get tangled with the mornings...although I've managed to train the current bloke to knock once and leave it on the step so I don't have to get up at some ungodly hour when the streets haven't even been properly aired. I'm not going to risk my health, even for SF!) Anyway, since I started reviewing books a few years ago my sense of hearing has become so acute that I can spot a good book by the sound it makes as it arrives now, so I thought I'd share my thoughts on a couple of tomes as part of this issues ramblings.

Irish Butter

First through the letterbox was the paperback edition of **Anne McCaffrey's** latest, 'Killashandra', a sequal to her 1982 **The Crystal Singer**. This latest covers a time when Killashandra (the name comes from a brand of Irish Butter) leaves Ballybran and gets involved in all sorts of kidnappings and planetary politics before getting her man. It is not to be read while dieting or after signing the pledge because there is an awful lot of eating and drinking done in the story, by the way.

I saw Anne a few months ago at the Birmingham SF group's 15th birthday party, and learned that at present she is writing a 'prequal' to her dragon books, so that at last we'll all find out how Pern was colonised and the dragons bred from the firelizards. Anne's books have spawned a number of games, both role-playing and computer, the latter I've not yet had a chance to try because my joystick is broken...

At the time of the con Anne was sporting the fading traces of pink, purple and blue streaks in her hair which certainly made her look like an SF writer, (although they weren't there when my photo of her was taken).

To divulge, 15-con was a smashing con, celebrating the birthday of one of the most successful SF groups in this country, and jointly the same anniversary of Andromeda bookshop, also in Birmingham. Thanks to the allure of Rog' Peyton, or mayhap his armtwisting, there were so many SF Fantasy and Horror authors underfoot that ordinary attendees like me were wondering if we would have to drag people in off the street in order to out-number them. Besides Anne there were (deep breath) Brian Aldiss, Iain Banks, Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Simon Ian Childers, Adrian Cole, Louise Cooper, David Gemmel, Colin Greenland, Harry Harrison, John Harrison, Robert Holdstock, Shaun Hutson, Leigh Kennedy, Garry Kilworth, Harry Adam Knight, David Langford, Christopher Priest, Geoff Ryman, Bob Shaw and Lisa Tuttle. Rog and his cohorts can supply just about any genre book ever penned and can be contacted at the aforementioned Andromeda Bookshop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1TA. The phone number is either one of those weird coincidences which only happen in the pages of **Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy** or is a masterly stroke of apt planning on somebody's part - 021 643 1999. Gerry Anderson should be so lucky!

The Colour of Pratchett

Anyway, enough of plugs for Rog, (who by now owes me a big favour), as I turn to the other book which I want to write about, **The Light Fantastic**, by **Terry Pratchett**.

I've not met Mr. Pratchett so far, but he was interviewed by my long-standing chum Neil Gaiman last year for me and a now defunct SF magazine which I won't mention by title, and what I will mention is I would quite like to meet said Mr. P at some stage, not only because I like his books but because he is a professional journalist who acts as dungeonmaster for his local D&D group and also works in precious metals. Snap, not quite snap and snap.

Anyway, to the book. **The colour of Magic** came out last year and dealt with the adventures of Twoflower the tourist, his minder, the inept wizard Ricewind and his somewhat supernatural paradimensional sentinent walking travellers chest, known as The Luggage, on a world supported by four elephants riding on the back of a giant turtle (sex unknown).

The Cover Blurb as Foe

When I got the book I took one look at the cover Blurb which reads "Jerome K Jerome meets Lord of the Rings" (with a touch of Peter Pan) and was flumoxed, as well as being in a state of mental indigestion caused by a surfeit of fantasy and unicorns. (Is there anyone else out there who feels that if they see another book with unicorns and magic they'll start to work their own spells with pins in publishers?) But I love it.

However, The Light Fantastic dropped through the letter box of Graham Towers recently with an optimistic prognosis and I was delighted to find, a). that the book lives up to my expectations, and b). it doesn't seem to be written with another book in mind (trilogies etc. bring me out in spots). Trying to explain the two books though is like trying to explain HHG to someone who couldn't understand a Vogon if it jumped up and ate him, so I'll content myself by writing that you should read both books and if you don't like them you can hit me over the head with a picture of a unicorn.

Other than those two books what else? A quartet from **The Woman's Press** arrived recently and I've tried to read them (I really have, letter box noise is not good) but haven't yet succeeded. I've not been able to get on with the SF books from this new imprint since they started up last year, in spite of wanting very much to welcome any new imprints into the field, but I've never really liked any of the books they've issued so far. I'm not really sure why except that they all seem to contain a rather indigestible dollop of women's lib and I'm afraid I'm one of those strange females who actually enjoys being female, and have no wish to beat every man over the head - or anywhere else - because he's got different chromosomes.

The Only Good Alien

While on the subject of SF imprints, and harking back to my present fatigue, with most fantasy coming hopefully in the spring, is a re-start of an imprint where men are men and the only good alien is a dead one - the **Venture Series**. Edited by Rog Peyton, (yes, him again) they hark back to the 'pure' days of SF, of action and adventure and derring-do among the stars, and are well worth looking out for. Rog hasn't got a date for the re-start as yet but some of the first series should certainly still be about.

Turning back to the box, wasn't it nice to welcome back the **Doctor** last Saturday - well it was last Saturday as I write this, and with **Trek** back the Thursday before. Famine or Feast from Auntie, and what with that and the lizards still rampaging late at night in my region with the new series of **'V'**, we're being spoiled I suppose.

Last mentioned first (again), I missed last week's episode of 'V' as I was at the switch on for Blackpool Illumination and forgot to programme my VCR but I've been told that it was a muddled marriage of a couple of pretty much unrelated episodes.

Silly Lizards

In one half, heroine Julie suddenly appeared in a neck brace and then suddenly it had gone and she was somewhere else entirely for no clear reason. Mind you, for 'no clear reason' just about sums up 'V' these days, unfortunately. When it started it was a good tale, which should have finished at the end of the first series with the freedom fighters' discovery and distribution of the anti-alien dust but now it has slipped so far that it has become pretty silly, and formula. Diana does this, captures that person, and the freedom-ers rescue them etc. etc. etc. And can anyone explain why the lizards these days find each other so sexy when they're wearing their human trappings? Silly. Another alien race I'm slowly getting exasperated with are the Time Lords of Gallifrey. Maybe I'm wrong to judge by the evidence of only one episode of the new series of Dr. Who but it seems to me that they are a singularly ungrateful lot. The Old Doc has saved their long-lived hides and planet on more than one occasion and at their request he's done a bit of cosmic meddling from time to time and yet what do they promptly do, they put him on trial (yet again) for just that meddling. I wouldn't have thought that if they have a yen to have a big showy trial then the obvious candidate would be a much more malignant meddler, The Master, and yet they do nowt about him. It's all a bit illogical and inconsistant.

Didn't think much of the set for the trial either - if Time Lords are so smart why didn't they design the courtroom so that the judges and so on could see the screen without having to turn round all the time like ducks in a shooting gallery.

Aunty's Common Sense

Why for that matter isn't there someone at the BBC **Dr. Who** production office with a dollop of common sense...?

Harking back to Blackpool Illuminations, it seems that for the first time in many a year there isn't a **Who** tableau this year.

Last autumn's gales have succeeded in doing what Colin Baker's always threatening to do to his costume these days, and burst the Who figure at the seams. It seems a shame, when there has been a Who scene in the world-famous display for many years, starting with a Tom Baker set. (And of course Tom Baker switched the lights on one season) However, I'm told that the figure may be refurbished and sent on somewhere else - I'll keep you posted.

What Happened to Will?

While I'm with TV it seems a shame that the BBC has quietly dropped the third part of the **Tripods Trilogy - The Pool of Fire,** just when the series had bucked up. The first series, from John Christopher's **The White Mountains** was a bit Ho-Hum, but the second, the **City of Fire and Gold** was a big improvement in terms of script and production and now we'll never know how earth got rid of these particular invaders (no it wasn't dust).

The BBC is working on a new SF series but so far aren't saying much except the title - and that has me worried - **Space Cops.** It sounds a bit juvenile. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind SF being made for chidren, I'm all in favour in fact, but the product must be of as high a quality of SF - or any programme - as for adults. Space Cops sounds a bit 'This is SF so we can be as juvenile and inconsistant as we like'. The best example of that attitude came in the **Walt Disney** Film, **The Black Hole**, at least so far as I was concerned. They were trying to be fairly serious I think and make a rival to **Star Wars** but then they threw in that dumb robot with the flip lid and at one stage had a hole blown in the side of a spaceship and the cast standing round chatting while the gentle breeze of escaping air ruffled their hair. Ho-Hum. **Plan Nine from Outer Space**, you have a modern rival! Though the classic **Plan Nine**, and good old **Killer Tomatoes** have a horrible fascination these days, so maybe in twenty years Black Hole might join them as a classic groaner of the genre.

Below: *Michael Jayston as the Valeyard, prosecuting councillor of the good Doctor Who, on trial by the Time Lords of Gallifrey, accused of 'interfering'.* **Photo © BBC 1986**

Below Left: *Lynda Bellingham as the Inquisitor/Judge and Colin Baker as his own defence.* **Photo © BBC 1986**

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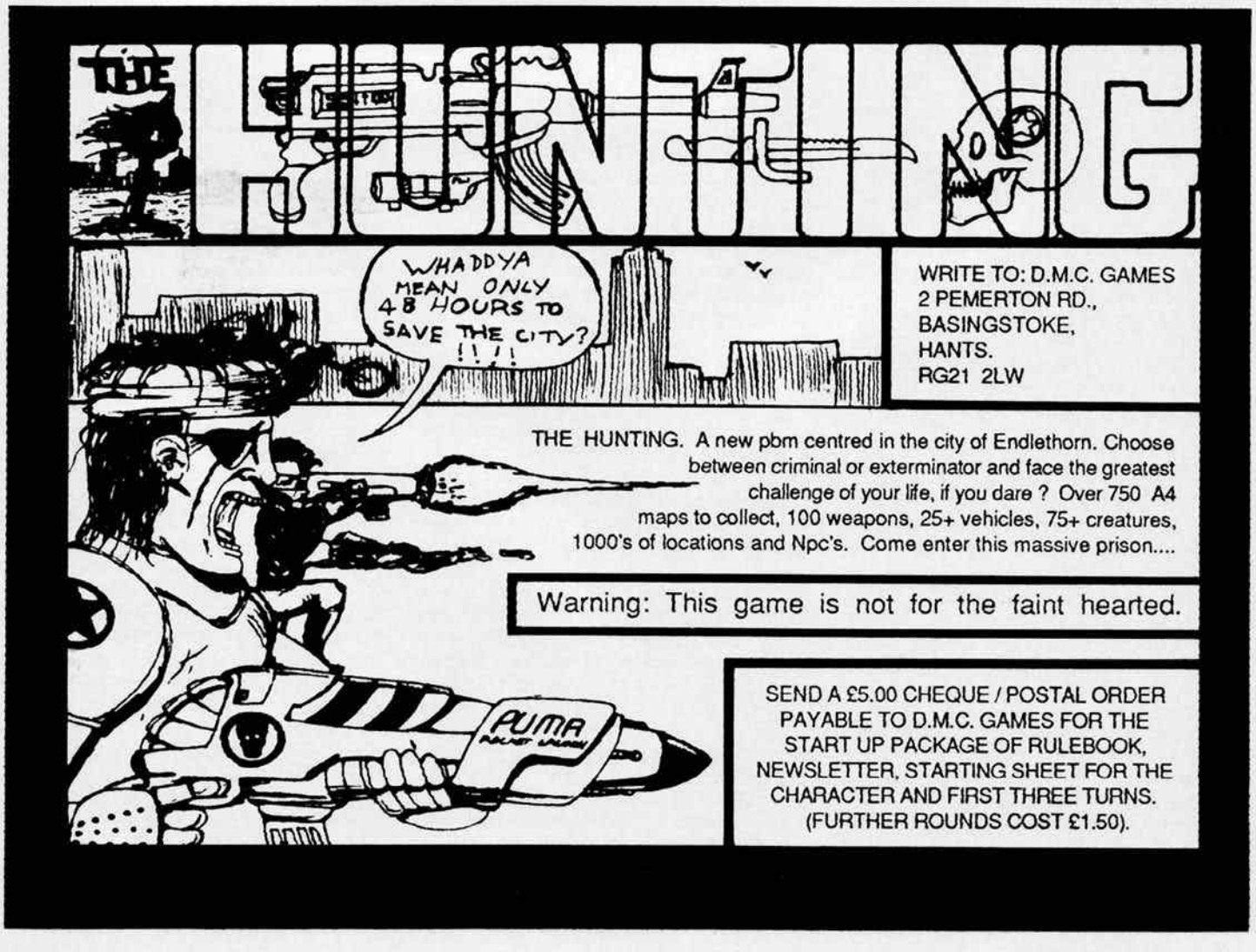
--BUT WE ARE HERE!
SCHLAF!
-I JUS' COMIN' TO DAT, HUMEBRAIN!
-IF DIS HIGH-UP, FURRY, FOOD-GIVIN' PLACE ALL DERE IS, -AN' WE DA ONLY PIPPLE-TYPE BEENGS ON IT, IT MEAN ONLY ONE THING!--
-YA MEAN?
-OH YAS!
-WE IS IN PARADISE!
RUDDY 'EAD LICE!
ITCH!
SCRITCH!
YAAARRHHH!
SCRITCH!



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A WEE DRAM OF DANGER

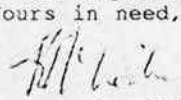
by Kevin Till & Christopher Reeves

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU INVESTIGATORS.....

The Surgery,
High Street,
Whaness,
Hoy,
Orkney.
17/9/23

My Dear boy,
Sorry about the lack of correspondence, but a matter of great urgency now presses me to write you this hurried letter. I cannot risk telling you more except that two recent fatalities have had a worrying link. Please speed to my assistance; be prepared for anything.

Yours in need,



Your uncle, Robert

A letter received by one of the investigators on 21st Sept 1923.

INVESTIGATORS' INFORMATION:

The investigator receiving the above letter is a nephew of **Dr. Robert McLeish.** The relevant character has been close to his uncle since his college days when he stayed with him at his English residence. It was during this time that the investigator was first enlightened to the perils of the occult, whilst spending many hours in his uncle's library, containing many books on the subject. When Doctor McLeish left for **Hoy**, to start a new practice in the reclusive Orkney islands, he left his large library behind, along with his perilous days as a psychic investigator.

The GM should choose a party member who most readily fills this role. The player should then be (secretly) informed of the relevant above information, and a photocopy of the letter.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION:

The island of **Hoy** is the second largest island in the Orkneys, situated 12 miles off the Northeast coast of Scotland. The island is mountainous and has sheer cliff faces on its coast. The population of roughly 3,000 mainly lives in and around the villages shown on the map. Most people make their living from either fishing or crofting.

Until recently, this has been a fairly quiet recluse for the good doctor. However, two corpses have recently been found and brought to the attention of the police. The mainland police pathologist attributed these deaths to freak accidents, but Dr. McLeish, present at the *post mortems*, came to his own, private conclusions. Convinced of the presence of some bizarre occult activity involving the draining of blood through the jugular vein, he instructed Ben, the gravedigger, to take special precautions in the burial of the bodies, and to watch out for intruders. Unbeknownst to the good Doctor, this 'occult activity' he suspected is the work of a vampire (see later).

When a week later, the vicar and a local girl disappeared, village tongues were set a-wagging with rumours of their elopement; the doctor fears a fate more sinister may have beset them, and has contacted the party.

ASSOCIATED CLUES:

During the course of the investigation, if any of the villagers of Rackwick are questioned, they may pass on one or more of the following rumours, at the Keeper's discretion:

1. **Gordon McFarlan**'s body which was found in a barley hopper at the Kilbride Distillery, had been drained of blood by the distillery's resident rats after he had died in a fall.
2. **Robbie Barrett**'s body was dragged up in the nets of an inshore fishing boat which anchors in Whaness. The body was hard to identify as the water had accelerated the decomposition process.
3. **In the** culmination of a suspected affair, the Rackwick vicar (Reverand Norris) eloped with a local girl (Betsy Calaway) to an unknown destination.

Gordon and Robbie were the first two victims of the vampire, and the Reverand Norris and Betsy are his latest. The Reverand and Betsy were about to elope, and there will be evident clues to suggest this, such as a ladder found nearby the young girl's home, and the abscence of clothes and travelling essentials in their rooms. However, their secret meeting was interrupted by Zator the vampire.

HISTORY OF ZATOR:

Since the early 19th. century, the residents of the east coast of **Greenland** had been terrorisd by a powerful vampire who they named **Zator,***'Taker of Life'*. The Eskimos had resigned themselves to the fact that the vampire would continue to prey on them and their descendants for all time to come.

Zator had grown up a fairly normal boy, **Eric Nordenskiold,** in a small fishing Greenland village. One day, whilst on a seal hunt, the boy stumbled into a hidden cave, once a mighty shrine to the great **Tsathoggua**, constructed many generations previously by a now extinct cult. The boy spent many hours entranced in the cave with its ice statue of the god and its rune-inscribed walls.

The youngster became obsessed with his secret find and was soon recruited as one of Tsathoggua's minions. The young eskimo spent much of his teenage life in the cave, and began to understand more about his surroundings. It was not long before he felt the duty to perform the first of many sacrifices.

It was during this time that Zator discovered his own blood lust. This he harboured and it grew to a craving that was reflected (or was the cause of) his growing unnatural strength. He began to take on vampiric characteristics as his sacrifices grew in number. After years of devoted worship and sacrifice, Tsathoggua rewarded Zator with strange and powerful spells (see statistics), which gave him an increased capacity for sacrifice. The increased frequency of deaths eventually forced the local population to respond.

A search of the country began, in the faint hope of finding the **Angekok** (Eskimo Shaman) who was fabled to live alone in the icy wastes of the north. After many months of searching, he was found on a remote glacier, and immediately set to work on constructing a symbol of power sufficient to repel the monster; a spiritually enchanted and consecrated whale's tooth was his eventual solution.

The two great powers met when Zator was traced to his glacial refuge by the Angekok. A prolonged spiritual battle ensued and, with the aid of the whale's tooth, the Angekok managed to overpower the vampire and was about to deal the killing blow when Zator used one of his powerful spells to summon Tsathoggua. The sight of the elder god's apparition sent the Angekok temporarily insane, managing to escape with his life, but at the loss of the enchanted tooth. He retired to his glacial retreat to recover and begin anew to make a magical artefact with which to combat the vampire.

Frustrating the Angekok, the vampire fled to Western Scotland with his faithful manservant **Yaso**, a mongol who served Zator in ignorance of the enormity of the vampire's evil. Zator kept the tooth in a lead casket to negate its weakening effect on him, and took it with him to keep it out of the hands of his adversaries.

Zator's final destination was the island of Hoy, where his distant relative had taken abode some years earlier. Here he would set about building a shrine and establishing a cult on the island, which he hoped would eventually spread to Scotland, England and Europe beyond. On arrival, Zator found an ideal site for his new shrine to Tsathoggua; an ancient burial chamber, the ***Dwarfie Stane,*** built around 2000 BC. This underground chamber was convenient in both its construction and its location close to his relative's home.

To help Zator quickly establish the cult, Tsathoggua blessed him with a powerful spell to allow the vampire's spirit to gain control of another person's body; the victim's spirit becomes dormant, supressed by that of the invader.

On 11th August, 1923, Zator approached his relative **Jamie Kilbride,** a wealthy and influential distillery owner, and began to gain his confidence. Zator realised he would need a front for his operations on the Island, and two days later cast the spell to allow possession to take place. Three days later, the process was complete, and Zator's spirit was transported into Kilbride's body. His own body was laid to rest until such time that the cult was firmly established and Zator would have no further use for Kilbride's body.

THE FERRY JOURNEY:

After receiving the letter, the investigators will have no trouble making their way to **Scrabster,** a port in NE Scotland where they will catch the ferry to Hoy. The small ferry boat leaves the port in early evening and the journey is blessed by a calm sea. The investigators are the only people aboard the boat except the ferryman, who if approached will avoid talking to the party on the subject of the deaths. If he is approached, a successful Spot Hidden roll will reveal an aroma of whisky on his body. This is due to his work at the distillery, and he is completely sober.

On arrival at Scrabster, the ferryman will take the luggage below and show the party to their sleeping quarters; a communal room with four double bunks separated by curtains. There are no facilities for passengers on deck and sleep will be encouraged by the ferryman.

If he is pestered by questioning and suspects that the party are investigators of some kind, he will follow the instructions given to him by Zator as follows; The journey is uneventful until a random member of the party is wakened by the sound of the ferryman pushing off in the rowboat. A small fire has been lit in the rear hold of the ferryboat. The party will have little difficulty in extinguishing this poorly laid trap; their main obstacle now being the navigation of the vessel.

Charts will be found in the wheelroom and with these and the ship's compass, a character with the necessary ship-handling skills will be able to navigate successfully to Whaness. If an unskilled character attempts to navigate, he may do so with a successful *'drive'* roll and a *'read English'* roll at -30%. Otherwise, the ferry will run aground on the southern shore of the island, the party will be wet and shaken. From here they will have to trek across the moors to reach the doctor's surgery in Whaness.

If unable to scuttle the boat, or if he remains unaware of the party's mission, he will remain aloof, and the journey will be uneventful. Once the party arrives at Whaness, by whatever method, they will easily locate the doctor's surgery, a short walk from the harbour.

THE SURGERY:

The party should arrive some time at night. They will see a large stone building, two storeys high, with a thatched roof. All appears well until they knock at the front entrance. The door will creak half-open; investigation reveals a forced lock.

The doors to the left of the hallway lead to the lounge and kitchen/dining room. They contain standard furniture and are inconsequential. The first door on the right leads to the waiting room, a bare room with benches on the North and South walls and another door, leading to the **Doctor's office and consulting room.**

A gruesome sight awaits the party here; on entering, they see the obviously dead Doctor McLeish slumped backwards in a red leather armchair behind his desk. The room is in dissaray; furniture is overturned and patient files are scattered around. The Doctor has been murdered with his own implements; he has a scalpel embedded in his chest and his stethescope tied tightly around his neck. A failed **SAN** roll will result in the loss of d4 points of San.

Investigating the doctor's body will reveal that his pockets have been out-turned; the contents are scattered on the desk in front- tobacco pouch, pen knife, handkerchief etc. A closed jotting pad on the desk has a scribbled message:

"Bodies- must contact Ben!"

This was a reminder for the Doctor to contact Ben, the gravedigger, to take the same precautions with the bodies of the vicar and the girl, if discovered, as with the previous corpses.

If a more thorough search of the Doctor is made (a sucessful *Spot Hidden* is required), or if an investigator specifically states he is looking up the left sleeve of his jacket, a patient's file will be found. This is the record of James Kilbride, frantically hidden by the Doctor when he heard the front door being forced open.

K

Ref. 3/21 to

Name: James Kilbride
Address: Kilbride House, Fox's Bank Road
Date: Notes:

4/5/21	Chicken-Pox	Calamine Prescribed
13/8/23	High Temperature Vomiting	
14/8/23	Delerias Inflamed + bleeding gums	
15/8/23	Deepening of Voice Skin blistering	
16/8/23	Further appointments Cancelled.	

The above notes are McLeish's observations on the effects of the possession of Kilbride's body by Zator, although at this point he was baffled by the symptoms.

The remaining ground floor room contains a small theatre which has also been ransacked and contains nothing of great relevance.

There are five rooms upstairs; the doctor's bedroom, two guest bedrooms, a toilet and the housekeeper's room. They have all been searched and contain no relevant clues for the investigators. Inside the housekeeper's room, however, the old woman has been gagged and bound in her bed. She is visibly relieved to see the Doctor's nephew, whom she recognises from photographs.

Once untied and settled down with a mild sedative, Agnes will tell her tale;

"Earlier this evening, just after I retired, and after bidding goodnight to the Doctor, I was woken by a large man who held me down and tied me up. I was so frightened, I didn't know what to think. He was rooting through my dresser, looking for things to steal, but I don't think he took my purse-- no, no he didn't. There it is, thank goodness.

Anyway, while he was in the room I heard more noises downstairs- banging and shouting, and then a horrible scream. Oh, it made me feel very frightened and I cried a wee bit."

The screaming was that of the Doctor. When she hears of his fate, Agnes will become hysterical; a successful *oratory* roll or mild sedative will calm her and she will become quite faint, capable of answering further questions. Agnes knows nothing of the Doctor's suspicions, only that he seemed troubled lately, and that she was to prepare the house for the investigators' visit. She will be able to answer any other questions about the locals, where Ben and Kilbride can be found, plus a lot of the local gossip about the vicar's elopement, etc.

THE VILLAGE BOBBY:

The local constabulary goes by the name of **McKinnon**, and lives in Whaness. Until 8th. September, when he was seduced into Zator's flock, he carried out his duties conscientiously, and with ease; The recent spate of deaths have been his only contact with the mainland in the last five years. It was following his reports and the subsequent mainland investigation that Zator realised the constable's potential value as a cult member. The bobby now continues his duties as normal (apparently), yet fails to report any irregularities of the cult's doings. If questioned on this matter, he will simply state that the matter is in the hands of the mainland authorities, evidently still studying his reports.

If McKinnon is suspicious of the investigators, he will use his position to hinder them, and will keep Zator informed of their activities. A successful *Psychology* roll will indicate that something is amiss with McKinnon, as though he is entranced.

The policeman will not physically attack any investigator unless absolutely necessary.

THE RACKWICK CHURCH:

The investigators may arrive at Rackwick church after hearing the rumour of the vicar's disappearance, or in search of Ben, or for any other reason. They will be met by a stout, elderly man standing on a ladder, placing what appears to be onions above the front entrance to the church (it is, in fact garlic). Ben is the only person aside from the Doctor who suspects that there

is something very odd about the recent deaths: he blames it on vampires, but didn't dare suggest that to the Doctor for fear of being laughed at.

A superstitious and wary man, Ben's confidence must be gained before he will divulge his theory, or explain that the Doctor's message refers to the extra care to be taken over any recent or forthcomi```ng deaths. He fears the worse for the vicar.

If the church is approached at night, or if Ben is avoided, a search of the graveyard will reveal two fresh graves. If secretly exhumed, two decapitated corpses will be discovered, covered with garlic cloves. Closer examination in the form of a *post mortem* will reveal them as dehydrated, pale and bloodless corpses, with collapsed circulatory system. A *spot hidden* will reveal two tiny white lumps on each severed neck, centrally located within a blackened 'bruised' area. These are the scars left by the bite of a vampire!

Ben will try to stop any exhumation--due to a combination of his superstitious fears and fear of losing his job, he will feel threatened by such blasphemy.

THE KILBRIDE HOUSE:

The entrance to this large house is situated $2^1/_2$ miles outside Rackwick on the road from the port of Whaness. If the party travel from Whaness to Rackwick, they will first see a large windowless building; James Kilbride's distillery. The house is some 150 yards further on.

This two-storey building is built from the local sandstone, and its many-windowed front is clad in ivy. At the end of an impressive drive are five steps leading up to the large double-doors.

The doors open into a spacious hallway, lavishly decorated with paintings and potted plants. Three doors and a corridor lead off this hallway. The first door on the left leads to the dining room.

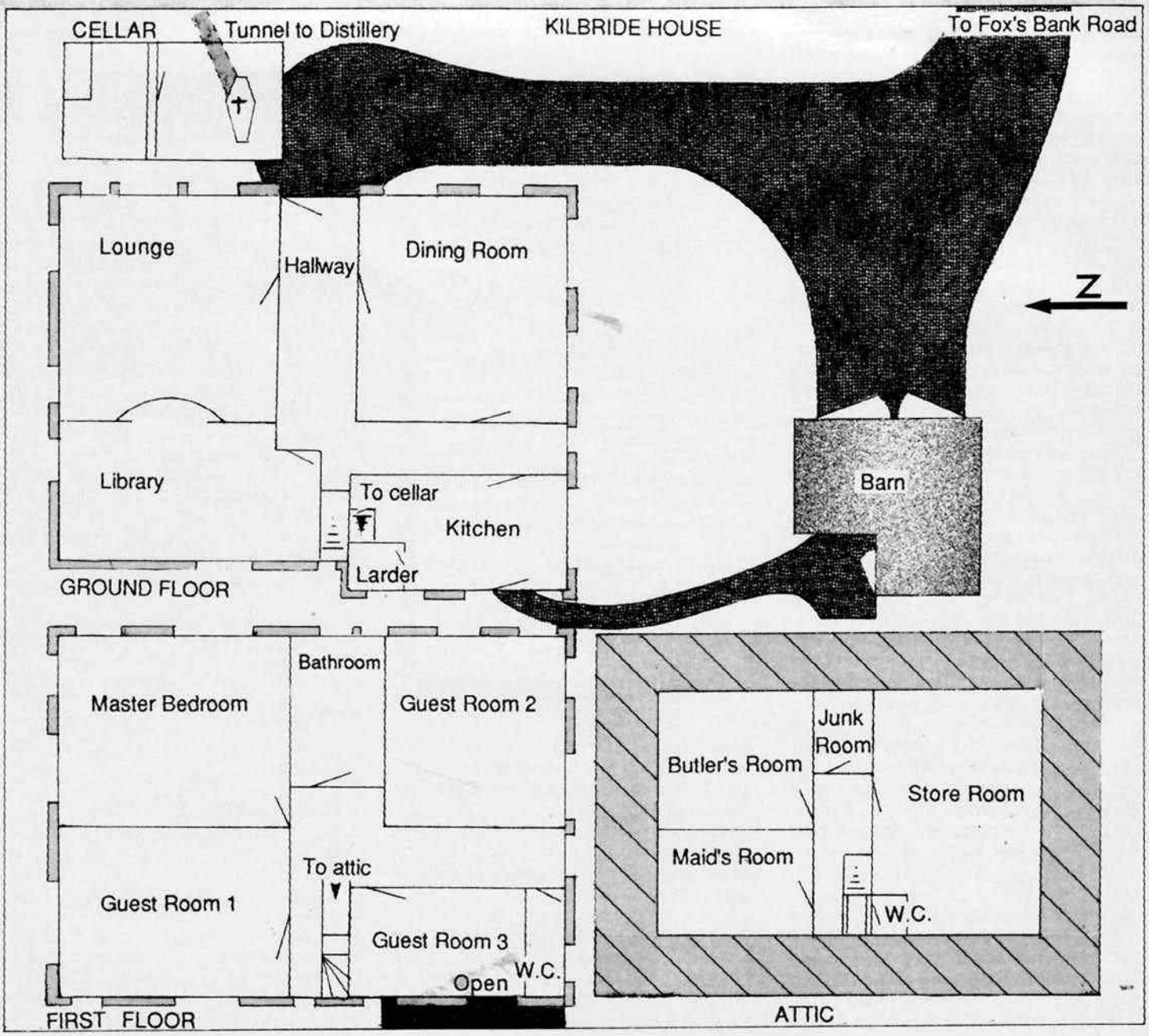
Dining Room:

In the centre of the room is a large mahogany table with 10 chairs seated around it. On the west wall are large glass-fronted cabinets containing expensive china and silverware. On the south wall hangs a large picture-frame containing a detailed, hand painted family tree. Close inspection reveals the name of James Kilbride at the foot of one of the many branches. A successful *linguist* roll will indicate that the origin of that branch contains names native to Greenland.

Lounge:

In the southeast corner of the room stands a grand piano. The opposite side of the room contains a large open fireplace, above which hangs a portrait of a smiling man. He has ginger hair and moustache, and the name James Kilbride is embossed on the frame. Sofas and chairs are arranged around the fireplace, and an archway in the west wall leads to the library.

If the painting is moved to one side, the investigators will discover the traditional family iron wallsafe. It is locked with a key which Zator carries. Without the key, a successful *lock-picking* roll must be made at -10%. Inside the safe is a lead box and a file of papers pushed to one side by the box. The box must be lifted out of the safe before it can be unlatched and opened. Inside the lead casket is a 12 inch long whale's tooth inscribed with strange



runes. A successful archeology roll will bring to mind a similar item was found on Iceland about 20 years previously, supposedly with magical powers. A further successful *Library* skills roll will uncover that the local rumours at the time (1902) suggests the tooth to have the power to ward off vampires. The papers in the file are Kilbride's property and a simple *Accountancy/Law* skills roll will reveal they are the deeds to the house and distillery.

The Whale's Tooth: This artefact, magically endowed by the Angekok, has a similar effect on Zator as a holy cross has on a Carpathian vampire. If held directly in front of Zator, he will be forced to back away, and is helpless if concerned.

Library:

Full bookshelves cover the north and west walls of this room. The books vary in subject matter and in age. The only one of note is a medical book which lies open on the room's large desk, on a page dealing with schizophrenia. The early effects of Zator's possession spell worried Kilbride sufficiently to investigate a possible medical explanation. The drawers of the desk contain many ledgers detailing the distillery's accounts. A successful *accountancy* roll will reveal no further entries since 13th. August 1923.

Kitchen.

This large room has all the usual features and a larder in the north west corner, next to which are the stairs leading to the cellar. The kitchen is in great dissaray. An investigator looking under the table will notice the maid's hat, the only real clue that the maid has vanished. She was victim to Zator in her own kitchen, her body lies buried in the barn outside.

Barn:

This is a separate building constructed in the same style as the house. It has two large barn doors at the front and a small back door, all of which are securely locked. Parked in the centre of the barn is a 1917 Daimler saloon, with a half-full tank of petrol and in present working order. There is a small patch of straw scattered across the earth floor of the barn. Hanging on the north wall is a large variety of tools for gardening and general repairs. If a Spot Hidden roll is made while searching the barn, the straw and the earth in the SW corner will suggest signs of recent disturbance... Removing the surface earth will uncover a corpse in a shallow grave. The body is badly mutilated but the clothes remain intact, identifying the corpse as that of the kitchen maid.

This is one of Zator's earliest victims after possessing Kilbride's body, and she has not been reported missing as yet.

FIRST FLOOR:

The stairs from the hallway lead to a small landing, leading off are six rooms. These stairs share a stair well with the narrower stairs leading to the attic rooms.

Guest Room 1:

This, like the other two guest rooms would normally be tidy and vacant. These rooms are large andwell-furnished, each with a four-poster bed, wardrobe and desk. This room has been used by Yaso since he and Zator first arrived on the 11th. August as guests of Kilbride. Upon entering the room, the curtains of the 4-poster bed will be closed and a large trunk rests against the west wall. The trunk is unlocked and contains bulky fur clothes to fit a large man. There is also a pair of snow shoes in the trunk. Two metal brackets have recently been fitted on the east wall. This is where Yaso hangs his whaling harpoon.

If the desk is searched, the investigators will find travel tickets in one of the drawers. There are two tickets for a boat journey from Scoresby, Greenland to the Kyle of Lochalsh, Scotland dated 16/7/23. Another two tickets are for a train journey from Lochalsh to Scrabster, dated 7/8/23.

Master Bedroom:

This is Kilbride's bedroom, but his possessed body (Zator) has not returned to the room since the possession became complete. This room contains a four-poster bed, large wardrobes, bureau and a comfortable chair. A successful Spot Hidden roll will indicate an unusual presence of dust on items normally in everyday use.

The bureau is locked and a successful Lock Picking roll is needed to prevent damaging the furniture. It contains many papers and notes. The only item of relevance is Kilbride's diary. An entry on 10/8/23 tells how Kilbride was expecting a visit that day from a distant relative, Eric Nordenskiold. The investigators should remember this name from the family tree in the dining room, if they have been there. After this, the only other entry is on 14/8/23-- this is written in erratic handwriting;

"It is taking over me"

Bathroom:

This contains a large bath, toilet and hand basin.

Guest Room 2:

The furnishings of this room are the same as Guest Room 1. This was Zator's room when he first arrived. There is a chest containing his eskimo clothing and several empty cases (The contents are now in the attic study).

Guest Room 3:

Furnished as the other two Guest Rooms, and vacant.

Attic Rooms:

The small landing has five doors leading off it. The first door at the top of the stairs, on the left, opens into a W.C. The door opposite this is the maid's room.

Maid's Room:

Contains a low bed and a small wardrobe that holds inexpensive ladies' clothing.

Butler's Room:

Basically furnished with a bed, desk, wardrobe and chair, which has been overturned. The bed and walls are spattered with blood. A successful Spot Hidden will show several blood spots near the door. This trail leads to the junk room.

Junk Room:

The locked door is the entrance to a room cluttered with old furniture, rugs and antique oddments. The body of the butler is covered with a large grey dust-sheet. If uncovered, the body lunges at the nearest player in an attempt to grapple and strangle him. The butler is in the early stages of becoming a vampire, though the process is not yet complete, and he attacks as a zombie (see sourcebook). If destroyed, the players should have noticed his rather large, pointed canine teeth and surmise that these are fangs. It would be wise if they decapitate the body, to avoid the butler's re-animation later on (a shrewd referee would have him follow the party into the tunnel, later on...).

Store Room:

The final door on this floor is locked and leads into an old store room. It is here that Zator has placed his valuable manuscripts. The west wall is rather cluttered with household belongings, leaving a cleared space occupied by a wooden table, draped with a fine red cloth; at each corner of the table is a silver candlestick which hold unlit red wax candles. Lying open on the table is a large book:

Zator's Tome: This contains several clearly different parchments bound in a black leather cover. One section, of similar parchment, is written in Greenlandish. It tells of how *Tsathoggua* left his refuge in **Saturn** and travelled to earth. Reference is made to a glacial cave in Greenland where the original cult of Tsathoggua built a shrine to their master. The spell, Contact Tsathoggua (see CoC rule-book), is found on the last few pages of this section. These writings were copied by Zator from the walls of the ice cave. With the first change in parchment comes a change in written language; another spell is found on these pages, written in English and describing a powerful ceremony that results in the spell-caster's soul possessing another person's body, and the spell for reversing the process.

Possession Spell:

This spell allowed Zator to take control of Kilbride's body. It effectively allows the caster's soul to enter the body of another. His original body becomes dormant immediately, and remains so until the reverse of the spell is cast, wherupon the user returns to his own body. To succeed, the user must expend 9 magic points, and must subdue the victim's POW (use the resistance table, POW vs. POW). If unsuccessful, the caster's soul will still enter the victim's body, but will not take complete control. Instead, the victim suffers a strange split-personality ailment. The two minds operate in the one

body alternately. This is a permanent state, and the reverse of the spell can not be performed. The 'split-personality' state will also be evident in the first few days of a successful possession, as with Kilbride, as the parasite struggles for control of the new body.

Exorcism can be performed by a third party by casting the reverse of the spell whilst maintaining physical contact with the possessed body. This is done at a cost of 11 magic points. If the parasite's body has been destroyed or damaged, this exorcism will prove excruciatingly painful, leading to death if the body is destroyed.

Casting the spell either way will be at a cost of d10 SAN. Any possessed victim suffers the same loss of SAN.

The final pages of the manuscript detail a third spell that Zator has used many times to acquire new cult members and get them to perform foul deeds:

Gaze Of Command Spell:

Casting this spell requires the caster to gaze into his victim's eyes. A successful POW vs. POW roll will effectively 'hypnotise' the victim, rendering him slave to the caster's suggestions for 10 +d6 hours. This spell costs d4 Magic Points to cast, and there is no penalty for a failure.

Reading the entire tome will give +4% to Mythos Knowledge and a loss of -d6 SAN. It would take 2d6 weeks to read following translation from Greenlandish. The spells alone could be read in a matter of hours, with no effect on Mythos Knowledge.

The Cellar:

Wooden stairs lead from the kitchen to the cellar. The electric light no longer works; the room is in darkness day and night. Illumination will reveal a wine rack on the south wall, containing many bottles of wine and whiskeys with Kilbride's label. A spot hidden roll will reveal a message scratched on the side of the wooden staircase. Written by Kilbride when still barely in control, it reads "Help Me!". A broken bottle (used by Kilbride to write the message) lies on the floor below.

A second Spot Hidden reveals a false section in the wine rack, hiding a secret door.

This door leads to a second room, roughly excavated from stone. This is an original feature of the house, and Kilbride proudly showed it off to his relative when he first arrived. Zator has used the tunnel and secret room to full advantage.

On the floor in the centre of the room is a large ebony coffin. The lid is shut and unsecured. It contains an eskimo body (Zator!), apparently dead with closed eyes. The mouth is slightly open. If opened further (by a **very** brave investigator), two large fangs will be revealed. If decapitated, Zator's soul will be banished when exorcised from Kilbride's body.

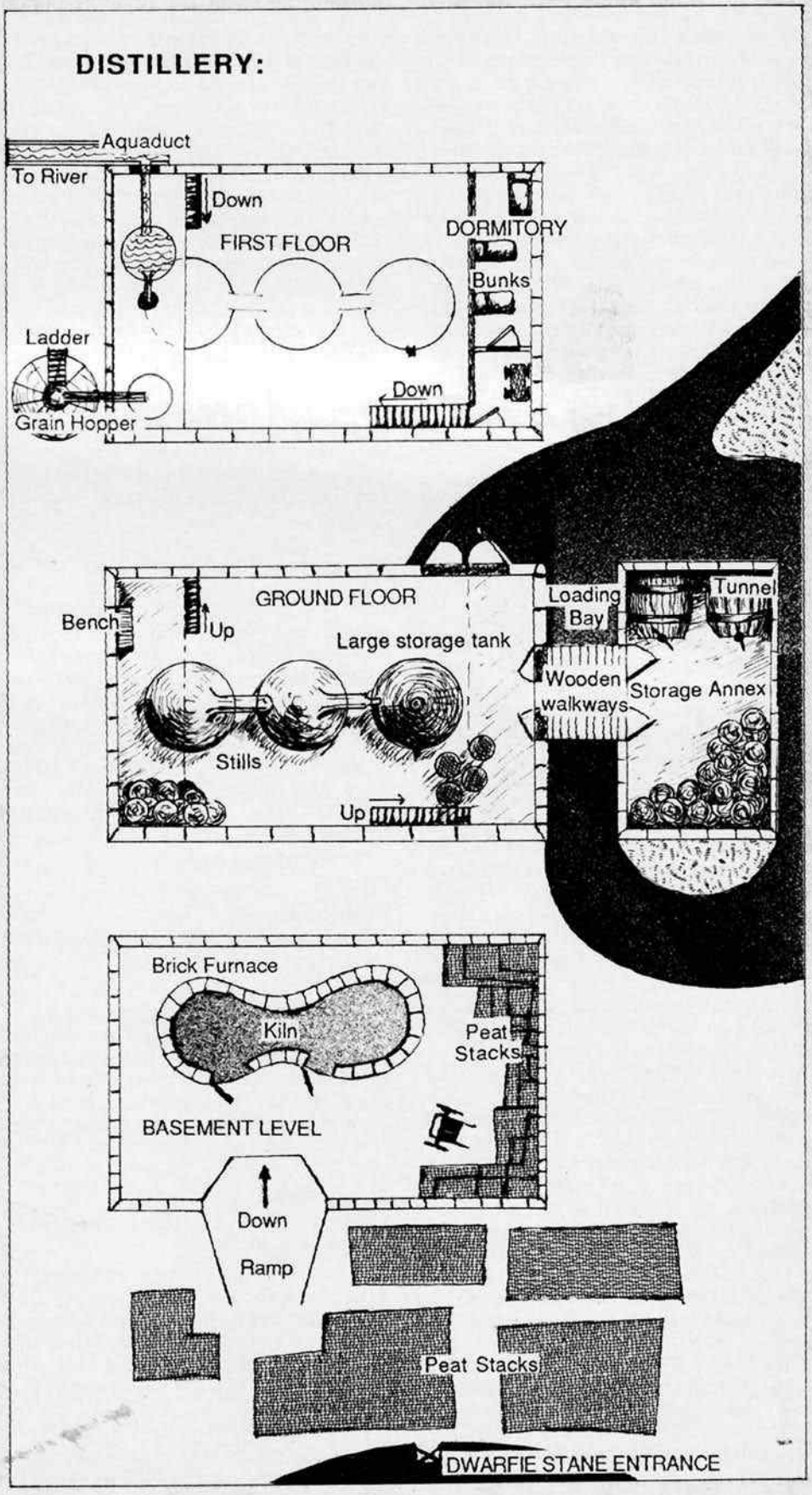
A Spot Hidden roll will show furrows in the soil where the coffin has been moved to one side. It will take 3 men to move it, uncovering a stone stairway descending into the tunnel, leading to the distillery.

Entering The House:

Knocking at the front door will prove fruitless, but watching the house will make it obvious that someone is inside (Yaso). To get in, they're going to have to break in through one of the windows or doors. Yaso's main job is guarding the house, which he does with vigilence, aided by his harpoon when he is suspicious.

THE DISTILLERY:

This can be reached from either Fox's Bank Road or from the secret tunnel leading from Kilbride's cellar. Constructed of sandstone and reaching 50' in height with a slate roof, the entrances are via large double doors at the front. There is a sunken loading bay trade access. A river runs close by, from which water is taken to assist the whiskey making process. The wooden walkways



above the trade entrance connect the main building to a single storey barrel storage building. At the other end of the main building is a large grain hopper where Gordon McFarlan's body was found. At the rear end of the building are stacks of drying peat used to fire the furnaces. A ramp leads down to the furnace room through a stone archway.

On entering the large double doors, the mechanics of a simple distillery process can be seen. There is a large storage tank at the south end, fed by two equally large copper stills. The first still receives the ingredients which are prepared on a first floor preparation level. On this level there is a watertank that receives its water from the river via an aquaduct. A grain screw lifts the contents of the hopper into a measuring barrel on the same landing. Wooden steps connect this level with the ground floor. A second set of steps leads up to an enclosed room on another landing at the south end of the building. This room was originally the brewery's office, but has been converted to a dormitory, containing 3 double bunks and a table to house Zator's cult members. Directly below this landing are two doors, each leading onto a wooden walkway that go over the road, which is here channeled below ground level.

The walkways lead to a barrel storage annex which has many full barrels at the west end and two enourmous barrels at the east end. The tunnel from Kilbride's house emerges into the back of one of the enourmous barrels, via a set of stone steps.

The other barrel contains a finely constructed ebony coffin, where Zator rests during sunlight hours (7am to 11pm). Both barrels appear to be sealed, but a successful Spot Hidden will reveal a simple hidden catch on the rim of the barrel. The barrel bottom hinges open.

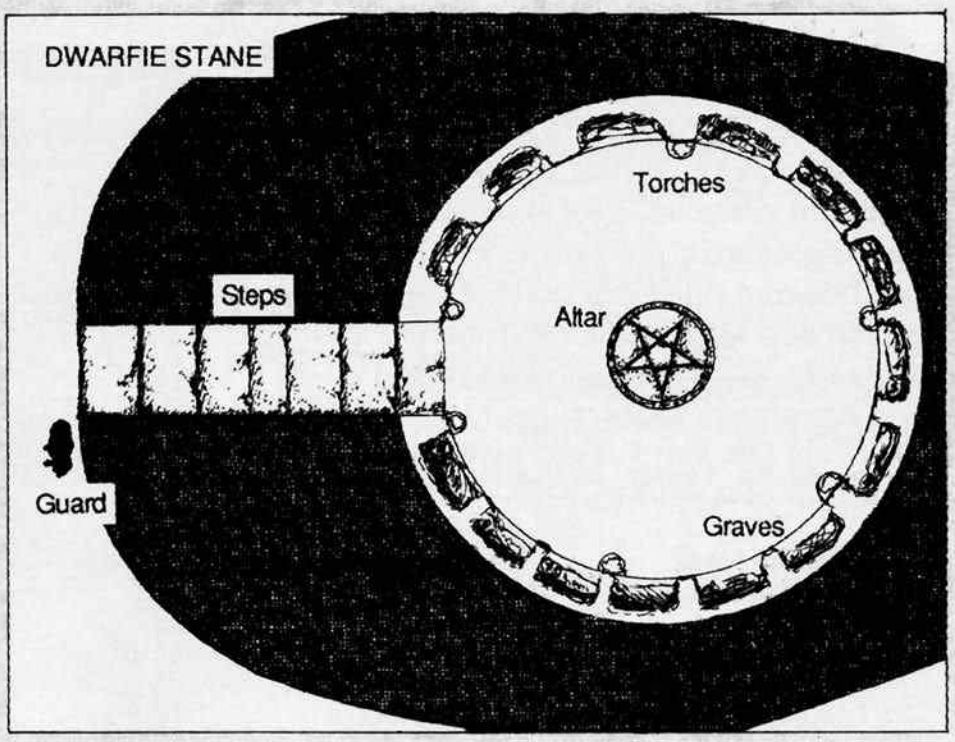
The furnace room can only be accessed from the ramp leading from the peat stacks. The room is below ground and contains a brick furnace, used to heat the stills, and a store of peat. The furnace remains unlit as Zator has not been producing whiskey. He has used it to dispose of recent victims including the vicar. Examining the contents of the furnace will produce a charred human skull and a small, burnt and tarnished platinum cross.

THE CULT MEMBERS:

If the investigators arrive during the daytime, Kilbride (Zator) will be in his coffin. A guard is posted in the annex, sitting on a barrel. Five other guards will be on duty, two of whom sit on the peat stacks guarding the Dwarfie Stane while the other two remain in the distillery building to fend off any enquiries.

At night time, when not searching for victims, Zator will be found worshipping Tsathoggua inside the Dwarfie Stane. The guards sleep in shifts, leaving two awake to guard the Dwarfie Stane and the distillery.

These henchmen are all devoted servants of Zator, many of whom are ex-employees of the distillery.



THE DWARFIE STANE:

This is an ancient burial chamber dating back to 2000 B.C. and is now used by Zator as his Temple to Tsathoggua. The huge sandstone block is partially hidden by the peat mounds, but the entrance tunnel, guarded 24 hours a day, is clearly visible once past the peat mounds. Steps carved into the sandstone lead down into a large circular chamber, always lit by bracket-mounted torches. The chamber floor is earth, and the surrounding walls are honey-combed with graves dug into the sandstone. Each grave holds the ancient remnants of long-dead people. In the centre of the room stands a large circular stone altar with a pentagram carved into the surface. A blood-drained corpse of a young woman lies draped across the altar (Betsy). Investigators failing a SAN roll will lose d4 pts of SAN.

If Zator is still around, he will be in the chamber when the investigators enter, looking pretty much like Kilbride. He will be found standing over his victim with blood dripping from his fangs. Loudly cursing the party for interrupting his 'ritual', he threatens the wrath of Tsathoggua and advances on them. *Showdown!!*

CONCLUSION:

For the party to succeed completely, they must destroy Zator and his cult, but must not harm the innocent Kilbride. To do this, Kilbride's body must not be harmed physically, whilst Zator's must be decapitated. Then, aided by the whale's tooth, the reverse of the possession spell must be cast. Kilbride will be free of the parasite. He will be confused and exhausted, and will need institution- alisation for several weeks before completely recovered.

Killing cult members may be necessary, but if any survive, and Zator is destroyed, the effects of the Gaze of Command spell will wear off, and they will repent. The penal system will decide their fate, including that of PC McKinnon.

STATISTICS:

YASO:

STR:15	CON:12	SIZ: 16
INT:4	POW:8	DEX: 8
APP:5	EDU:3	HP: 14

Dam. Bonus: d4

Skills: Fist/Punch 90%, Head Butt 70%, Harpoon 75%

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Six Cult Members:

STR: 12	CON: 10	SIZ: 12
INT: 7	POW: 8	DEX: 8
APP: 7	EDU: 6	HP: 11

Skills: Fist/Punch 70%, Head butt: 50%, Shotgun 40%, Small Club 50%

Between them, the cult members have two shot-guns, one a 12-gauge the other a 20-gauge. They also have a small club each.

ZATOR:

STR: 15	CON: 16	SIZ: 14
INT: 17	POW: 18	DEX: 14
APP: 15	SAN: 0	EDU:9
HP: 15		

Skills: Read/Write Greenlandish 80%, Read/Write English 40%, Bargain 60%, Climb 80%, Cthulhu mythos 60%, Dodge 28%, Fast Talk 60%, Hide 70%, Jump 50%, Listen 50%, Occult 50%, Oratory 60%, Sneak 65%

Spells Known: Contact Tsathoggua, Possession (and reverse) and Gaze Of Command.

N.B. Zator takes with him all the above statistics into Kilbride's body. Because both men have a similar physique, SIZ CON and STR remain the same.

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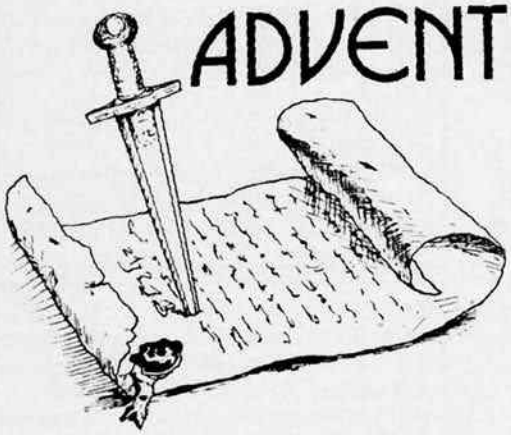

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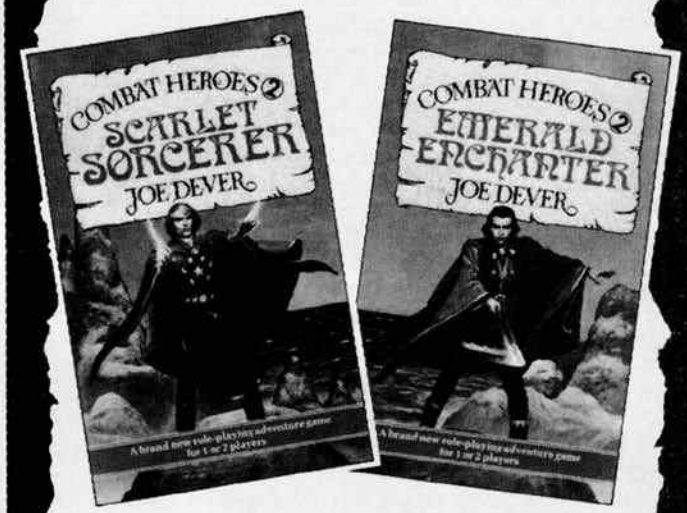
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WITHIN THE QUIET PLACE, LORD DENNY WHIPLASH CONSIDERS THE EVENING'S...
EEYYAAH!
...HORRORS...
LADY CIELHENGE!
HARRY! CASSANDRA! WAKE UP!
HE CAN SMELL IT, EVEN BEFORE HE REACHES THE OLD WOMAN'S CHAMBER.
...GOOD GOD...
LIKE A THREE-WEEK OLD CARCASS, REDOLENT, HONEY-COMBED WITH MAGGOT TUNNELS-
-SOMETHING WITH MURDER IN ITS EYES-
-MURDER ON ITS BREATH-
-AND MURDER IN ITS SNARL.
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INSTINCT OVERRIDES SHOCK AS LADY CIELHENGE STARES, GLASSY-EYED, REFUSING TO COMPREHEND THE REALITY OF THE THING;
WHIPLASH EJECTS THE VISITOR, INSTINCT FAILS TO CONSIDER HEIGHT.
THE INVESTIGATOR, GALVANISED BY THE COLD STAB OF ALTITUDE, SAVES HIMSELF.
THE BONY CREATURE, LESS ABLE TO REACH THE BRANCHES...
...COMES TO A MUCH LESS GENTLE STOP.
THE STENCH OF OLD DEATH STILL IN HIS NOSTRILS, HE RUNS TO HIS VICTIM AND HIS FRIEND UNDER THE HAUNTED HALF-LIGHT.
WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED? I HEARD...
OH.
GOOD GRIEF. WHAT D'YOU CALL THAT?
CALL IT WHATEVER YOU LIKE.
HEH.
IT CAN HARDLY ANSWER YOU BACK NOW.
A MOANING WIND TUGS AT THE MEN, UNHEEDED...

WAK
WOK
FOR THEIR OWN PAINED YELLS DROWN IT OUT.
RECOGNITION DANCES IN ITS EYES. THIS IS WHIPLASH. SO CLOSE TO THE RING, HE COULD BE DANGEROUS. IT DECIDES.
HCHAAA!
KBLAMM
BLAMM
IT HAS NO TIME TO ACT UPON ITS DECISION.
WINDOWS QUIVER. EARTH WRITHES. AIR THUNDERS - AS THE CREATURE, SCREAMING ITS HATE - - DISCORPORATES IN THE MIDNIGHT SKY.
HYAAAAH!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T TELL DADDY ABOUT THIS. HE STILL THINKS I'M YOUR SECRETARY
DAMN GOOD SHOT, THOUGH, EH?
WHIPLASH IGNORES THE GIRL. HE HAS NO THOUGHT FOR PETTY, HUMAN DANGERS SUCH AS HER FATHER'S DISAPPROVAL. HE CAN STILL SMELL DEATH.
ABOVE HIM, THE GRIM REAPER RIDES THE UPPER REACHES OF THE AIR. WHAT, HE WONDERS, WILL REPLACE IT IN THE MORNING?
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Children Of

Like so many creatures of folklore, myth and literature, the Vampire as portrayed in role-playing games is a **mere shadow** of the original conception. It lacks the depth, the variety and interest of the Vampire as portrayed in the **literature** of the genre especially.

This is an attempt to outline various aspects of the vampire which are not generally touched upon in role-playing games, or are dealt with in a superficial manner.

What is a Vampire?

Basically, a vampire is a once-human creature that is undead, and in order to sustain its unnatural existance, needs to extract some vital life force from living humans. Detail varies so much that it is impossible to have a more precise definition than that. Too many people merely think of vampires as being ***Bela Lugosi*** lookalikes, and they regard those that don't fit into that conception as something other than a vampire. This is something I disagree with, even though there are countless cultural and literary variations upon the theme of the vampire, the central theme of the undead creature living off the living is constant throughout. Surely that element is the most important element and diagnostic feature of the vampire? Put another way, is a vampire still a vampire if it doesn't wear black suits, eats garlic and comes from Outer Mongolia?

The actual range of what can be termed a true vampire is quite large, but there are so-called vampires that aren't true vampires. Fritz Haarman, a homosexual psychopath who killed many young men and boys in post WW1 Germany, was nicknamed the 'Hanover Vampire' - he was reputed to kill most of his victims by biting out their throats. He was hardly a member of the great undead. Elizabeth of Bathory was another so-called vampire, a Hungarian noblewoman who became obsessed with the idea that bathing in virgin's blood would restore and maintain her looks. It seems more likely that this was a repressed lust rather than an act of vampirism. Also there have been cannibalistic primitive tribes in various parts of the world who indulged in blood-drinking among other things. None of these are true vampires.

Also excluded are things like succubi and inccubi, amongst others. While they resemble the vampire in many aspects, none of them are undead or were once human. It's not so easy to be sure when dealing with creatures whose exact origins are somewhat obscure, although I imagine this is not a problem that faces GMs.

It is possible to define a range of characteristics that most vampires will fall into, despite the odd exception.

"For Blood is the Life"

Blood is vital to life; even primitive peoples know this. There is an almost universal belief amongst primitive people that blood itself is the life-force that keeps people alive. There have been numerous cannibalistic cultures in which the drinking of human blood for magico-religious reasons has been common. Interestingly, certain medieval sorcerers and magicians believed that it was possible to prolong life, good health and looks by drinking human blood. Others believed it was possible to achieve immortality by imitating the vampire, and perhaps **becoming** a vampire.

It is not surprising that most vampires depend upon drinking blood (normally human) to sustain their existence. It seems that most blood-drinking vampires tend to conform to the Hollywood image of the neck-nibbler, although some seem to prefer the thigh or the upper arm and others don't seem to be at all fussy. A rather different sort of blood-drinking Vampire of a more bestial kind tends to mutilate its victims in its attempts to get at their blood.

Some vampires have dispensed with anything so crude as drinking blood, instead they feed directly off the intangible **immaterial human life-force.** Physical contact between the vampire and victim is usually necessary, the nature and degree of the contact varies, but there are a few vampires capable of *remote* life force extraction. These most perculiar of creatures need to attract the victim's attention, for some staring into the victim's eyes is sufficient while others merely require the victim to think of the vampire. Fortunately, this type of vampire is very rare and somewhat particular in the choice of its victims.

Death and Destruction

To the majority of players, perhaps the most important features of the vampire are its vulnerabilities. Often a party of adventurers will stroll into a castle, draped with tons of garlic, splashing holy water around and waving holy symbols about. Then they look around, kill the vampire's henchmen and stick a stake through the vampire's heart, cut off its head, place garlic in its mouth, dowse it with holy water and then burn it just for good measure. This approach is bound to succeed if the party only ever comes across the more run-of-the-mill vampires. Such an approach is often doomed to failure if the party meets something a little out of the ordinary once in a while.

Many vampires do seem to be tied to the place where they were buried, or the casket/ coffin in which they were buried. This type of vampire must return to the grave/ coffin at regular intervals, or perish. Others seem not to be tied to any place in particular, instead they are tied to an object, most often something small and portable like a ring. Others are tied to a specific place, and must remain there and lure their victims in.

The thing that the vampire is tied to is the thing that brought the vampire to life. In certain parts of Eastern Europe, it is believed that bodies buried in unhallowed ground, or left unburied, will rise as vampires. If a vampire is injured, the power that originally animated the vampire will also repair any damage. An elaboration upon this idea is the belief that evil forces can act through physical objects in order to induce vampirism in the unsuspecting. Only by taking very careful precautions can this danger be avoided. The power of the evil forces varies; at certain times of the year, they are most powerful and woe betide anyone who ventures out on certain nights of the year, such as **Walpurgis Night**. It was believed that children born at certain times of the year would later become vampires unless they were baptised, fed the sacrament and given the name of a saint, all within a few hours of being born.

Not all vampires are tied to a specific thing or place, being free to wander at will although they may need to seek shelter from daylight.

Warding off vampires is not as straight-forward as it might seem. For instance, it seems that only vampires of a European (folklore) origin are adverse to the sight of the cross; vampires of a different cultural origin are immune to the power of the crucifix, or so it would seem. It is not only the crucifix that has power over vampires, other symbols of christianity, such as holy water, Bibles etc. make the European vampire recoil. Some would have you believe that these

BY PETE BLANCHARD

The Night

symbols of christianity are powerful in themselves, and it is their innate power that makes the vampire recoil. If this were true, surely then these symbols would be effective against vampires of different cultural origins.

This would not appear to be the case, instead it seems that the vampires recoil from the **symbols of good** that they were familiar with in life. Perhaps it is the memory of goodness that makes them recoil rather than the power of good overcoming their evil? However, it seems that very holy things make the vampire recoil, regardless of cultural origins. Obviously in these cases, it is the power of good driving away the evil.

Mirrors again seem to be something that only European vampires have a dislike for, even then it's not an entirity. The idea that the vampire casts no reflection is widely held, but it is also believed in some parts that vampires cast no shadow either. Then again, there are vampires which cast both reflections and shadows. One commonly held explanation for the lack of a shadow and/or reflection is that the vampire's body never leaves the grave. Instead, its spirit issues forth, in the form of a mist. The vampire can create illusion of form in the mind of the victim. This might also account for the vampire's supposed ability to change into a wolf or a bat. Personally, I think this theory poses more questions than it answers. For instance, if the vampire has no form other than a mist, how can it suck the blood of its victims?

There are other things that all vampires are supposedly adverse to. Hawthorn is one of these things, supposedly because Jesus wore a crown made of hawthorn. In a way it is another symbol of christianity, but it is strange that other plants that have religious significance, such as the Madonna Lily (the flower of the Virgin Mary) are not renowned for keeping the undead at bay. The only other plant with similar effect is garlic, but the reasons why remain a complete mystery. Neither garlic nor hawthorn stop all vampires, again it seems that they are only effective against European vampires, and even then not all of them. Hawthorn stakes stuck through the vampire's heart were thought to be particularly effective against vampires. However, a German folk tale tells of a vampire that used the stake that had been stuck through it to club its victims to death. It goes without saying that a stake through the heart is a particularly good way of dealing with vampires.

Most European vampires seem incapable of crossing running water, at least under their own steam. There are stories of vampires luring humans into carrying them across running water (for an example see **Everil Worrell's** short story **"The Canal"**), while other vampires seem to be totally incapable of crossing running water. However, vampires of all sorts seem to have no trouble crossing stagnant water, some live in swamps and dismal marshes though no vampire makes its home in water.

There are holy wells and streams, all of which are clean and fit for drinking, perhaps the purity of the water has something to do with it. Vampires being impure, can pass over water which is stagnant. The same sort of idea was used in the medieval practise of 'swimming' witches, in which suspects were bound and thrown into a river or pond. If the accused sunk (and drowned), they were innocent; if they floated they were guilty, their impurity rejected by the water. However, this idea breaks down. Dracula, for instance, in more than one of his filmic incarnations was destroyed by being immersed in running water, yet his coffin was transported to various places, and he must have crossed rivers more than once, without him being destroyed. It is difficult to see any real pattern in how even the more stereotypical filmic vampires behave in regard to running water.

Preventing a vampire returning to its hiding place just before day is a favoured method of destruction. However, as you may have guessed, not all vampires adhere to the usual nocturnal pattern. Even European vampires do not all conform. Some of the vampires of Polish folklore were human from midnight to noon, but from noon to midnight their souls would travel abroad in the form of bluebottles while their physical bodies carried on regardless. However, most vampires are confined to moving at night, and it is only a tiny minority that don't conform to this. By night the vampire can move unseen, their victims are all asleep. Darkness strikes fear into the hearts of the ignorant, all is shadow and unspeakable things may lurk in the gloom. In daylight the vampire would be a less fearsome adversary, and people would be tempted to take up arms in order to destroy it. Perhaps also at night the force that animates vampires is at its strongest.

Another method that also used to detect witches, was to trap the soul of the vampire in a silvered bottle. Quite a logical method in that a vampire's soul is trapped within it's body. When its body is destroyed, the soul generally leaves this world to whatever fate awaits it. Actually getting the vampire's soul into the bottle was quite difficult, generally involving the use of spells and trapping the vampire on the roof of a church. Once the vampire's soul was trapped, the body was destroyed, usually by decapitation and burning.

Burning is the most effective way to destroy a vampire, fire cleanses virtually everything. What it can not cleanse it destroys. It is probably safe to say that all vampires can be destroyed with fire, although an active vampire is not going to let itself be burnt. Some of the more powerful and diabolical types may have some control over fire, but they are still vulnerable to it.

The Power and the Glory

Vampires are reputed to have many strange powers, some of which we have touched upon already. All vampires do seem to have at least one power in common; the ability to hypnotise or fascinate their victims. In some cases the vampire seems to be able to control humans simply by the power of its will, although powerful vampires, such as Dracula himself, could not do such a thing. Other more run of the mill vampires are able to fascinate their victims in the same way that a snake can. They do not really take control of the victim's mind, only catch and hold their total attention. The most feared kind are the vampires who depend upon their beauty to enslave the hearts of the victims. Their appearance is such that they cause anyone who sees them, except the most chaste and devout, to fall instantly in love with them. What is so frightening is that when control is established, it is virtually total. While it might be possible to shake off the mind influence of a vampire, to break the hold of a vampire upon a man's heart is another matter.

This control can take a slightly different form. It can be used to corrupt the victim, by implanting thoughts and feelings into their mind. A corrupted mind is often more willing to serve the vampire.

Vampires are also credited with the

power of transformation, into a fog, wolf or bat. However, originally, it seems vampires did not have any power of transformation. The idea of the vampire's ability to assume the form of a wolf most likely owes its existence to the long connection between the vampire and the werewolf. This association has also lead to various aspects of the vampire myth being incorporated into that of the werewolf. The idea of the bat form is quite recent, it wasn't until the discovery of the South American Vampire Bat that it first began to appear. The idea of the vampire becoming a cloud of vapour is nothing but a fabrication of Hollywood, and probably owes its existence to the 19th century spirituals and their virtual obsession with ectoplasm.

Of course the vampire could do all of these things if he were a great sorceror. It is known that several Medieval Sorcerors believed they could attain immortality through vampirism, and could become vampires through the use of magic. It is not known whether any actually succeeded in their attempt, but many were burnt at the stake for their crimes. In order to become a vampire, it was thought necessary to drink vast amounts of fresh human blood (amongst other things). Some diabolists believed that Satan would grant them immortality through the agency of vampirism if they served him well.

There are tales of vampires with magical, even diabolical power, who were obvious sorcerors in life. Their powers did not diminish with their death, rather, they increased. However, it could be that they accepted death and they were already evil and twisted. Little or no change would occur to their personality, and probably they retain many of their skills and knowledge.

It is indisputable that there is something evil about the state of undeath, it must be an evil force that animates the dead and makes them walk abroad. It goes without saying that vampires are evil, since their actual mode of existence can hardly be described as a model of saintly behaviour. When someone becomes a vampire, they must become evil, and if they were in life 'a good person', some radical changes must take place in their personality. The lust for blood is overpowering, it can overcome any compassion and conscience that might linger in the mind of the vampire. If they resist the urge to drink blood, the urge becomes more powerful. The more the vampire seeks to oppose the bloodlust, the more it destroys what goodness remained in the vampire. The only time that skills and knowledge are lost is when they are repulsive to the evil nature of the vampire. A priest who became a vampire would seek to forget much of his priestly knowledge.

The elements of the personality that are most likely to remain are harmless little idiosyncracies and eccentricities. The overall gross structure of the personality may be changed by the experience of vampirism, but some elements simply do not change.

One thing that doesn't change is intelligence.

Vampires are just as intelligent as human beings, although the form intelligence takes, often differs.

Lords, Ladies and not-so-Gentlemen

So far the rules and exceptions to the rules have been discussed. What has to be borne in mind is that most vampires of literature and folklore conform to most of the rules. Generally it is personality that gives vampires their individuality, rather than their powers and weaknesses. When an exception to the rule crops up, such a vampire is almost without exception, deadly to an extreme.

While it is not really practical to classify vampires by their powers and weaknesses, it is possible to classify most European vampires, at least, by their behaviour. Vampires from non European cultures are a little more difficult to deal with, simply because, the lack of information and the fact that only in Europe (and North America to a lesser extent) did a proper vampire literature actually develop.

Basically, there are three main categories of vampire:

1). The Aristocrat

A rather Byronic figure. This type of vampire is usually male and most often titled (Count is the favourite title). Their breeding, intelligence, eloquence, education, subtlety and perhaps most of all somewhat tragic majesty marks them out as different to the more plebian vampires. They are somewhat misanthropic, avoiding contact with the lower orders of the human race, but they relish the company of the beautiful, the intelligent and the gifted. The same applies to their taste in victims. What makes this vampire really dangerous is its need of a challenge. It seems to enjoy the challenge of the hunt as much as it enjoys intellectual stimulation and debate. Once it tires of its toys, it will hunt them down and destroy them.

In seeming contradiction to this, if any vampire has a conscience, it is this type that does. It is difficult to say whether it is guilt that makes them gloomy and moody, or the terrible nature of their existence.

2). Femme Fatale

The darling of many a writer, a beautiful lamia that feeds off adoration, luring her victims into falling in love with her physical charms, and then destroying them. Hardly the most sophisticated mode of operation, but perhaps the most effective.

This type of vampire seems to feast upon melancholic young men with rather morbid fascinations and an over-active curiosity. It often lures its victim not only with its beauty by laying a trail of clues to fire the victim's curiosity and lure them to their death. Then there is the 'vampire kiss', a kiss from this sort of vampire is reputed to be sheer ecstasy, even if it is often fatal, and victims have been known to die willing just for that kiss. Often a victim will engineer the situation in such a way that the vampire is also destroyed, a victim will often experience jealousy and posessiveness, and to know that the vampire will live on and bestow on others the ecstacy of the 'vampire kiss' is more than they can bear.

Of all the vampires, this is the one most likely to feed on things other than blood (for a good example of this read Fritz Leiber's **"The Girl with the Hungry Eyes"**).

3). The Monster

Not a very satisfactory name, as most vampires tend to get stuck in this

category. These vampires tend to be more direct in their approach to obtaining blood, and are generally not as choosy or limited in their choice of victim.

At one extreme, there are vampires which are brutal and violent, in that they tend to mutilate their victims, and in many ways they resemble werewolves in their behaviour. Their minds operate in a very strange way, they don't have human intelligence. Instead they have a terrible cunning. They are truly monsters in the accepted sense of the word. This particular type is featured often in the vampire folklore of Eastern Europe.

There are "monsters" which indulge in sadistic torture of their victims, it's not quite the same as bestial mutilation. They take great delight in causing pain and fear, and go out of their way to terrify the local population.

Most vampires are simply driven by their bloodlust to go out and suck people's blood. They aren't bothered about the means they use, it's the end that counts. While they might not have great powers of mind control, or appear immensly beautiful, they are very strong, far stronger than any other sort of vampire. Generally they are strong enough to break human bones as if they were matchsticks.

Of course, some vampires exhibit characteristics of more than one group. Others don't quite seem to fit in, but at least the classification provides a useful guide to behaviour.

How to Become a Vampire

Classically, upon death, the victim of a vampire becomes a vampire himself. This is all very well and good, until you remember that the more run-of-the-mill vampire has an insatiable thirst for blood and is supposed to drink blood each night or suffer for the lack of it. Even supposing that a more ordinary 'monster' usually doesn't kill its victim outright and returns to drink more of their blood, when the victim dies, the number of vampires is effectively doubled. This might account for the 'epidemics' of vampirism that crop up in folklore. However, the problem is that unless the average 'monster' vampire kills its victim very slowly, say taking a month over one victim, the vampire population has the potential to explode on a very large scale. Even so, vampires would still really have to be constantly hunted down, like wolves or other wild animals, just to keep their numbers in check.

The bite of some vampires is fatal, the victim never rises from the grave. However, this kind of vampire doesn't really need to create hundreds of others. They are generally of the Aristocratic or Femme Fatale type, and fiendishly difficult to destroy. What they seem to do is take a mate, a companion to remain with them forever. It seems they have a special bite, or whatever, which they give their intended. Part of the vampire's essence is transmitted into their intended by that bite, and they become a vampire.

There is another alternative to this. As mentioned before, there does seem to be some evil force that animates vampires, and seeks out those that cannot resist. The bite of certain types of vampire would make any resistance impossible. This evil force seems to be everywhere, but it appears to be stronger in backward, rural or wild places, especially those with a bloody history. Here the evil force can attack one, and mark them to rise as a vampire when they die. New born infants are particularly at risk, as are those who become corrupt or dabble in occult mysteries. The accursed also are less than fully able to resist this evil influence, as a cloud is already above them. Some families seem more prone to vampirism than others, but this is generally a curse upon the family, rather than anything in the blood.

Undoubtedly, it is possible to become a vampire through sorcery, either by the use of appropriate spells and rituals, or by petitioning the powers that be. Sorcerors and alchemists searched an elixir of life, which would give them immortality, and down through the years all manner of thanatophobics have sought to preserve their lives. To them at least, undeath is attractive in that it represents an escape from death. They need not actually die to become a vampire, they can miss out the distasteful rising up from the grave. (it surprises me that vampirism also appeals to the morbidly inclined; it allows them to experience death at first hand, and "live" to tell the tale as well as allowing them to indulge in activities that might be denied to mere mortals.)

A Parting Shot

This is all very well, but when it comes to the crunch, it is up to the GM to give monsters and NPCs life. The vampire is in many ways an easy monster for the GM to role-play, there are many literary and filmic examples to draw upon. So many in fact, that it would take several pages to list even a tiny proportion of the material available. However, I would recommend the reader to get his hands upon some of the many vampire anthologies, as the short story is perhaps the best source of Vampire Inspiration.

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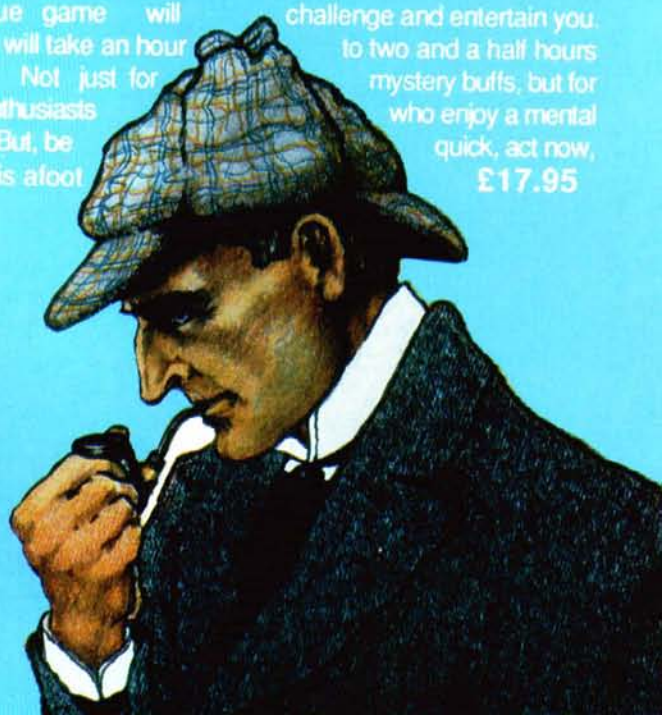

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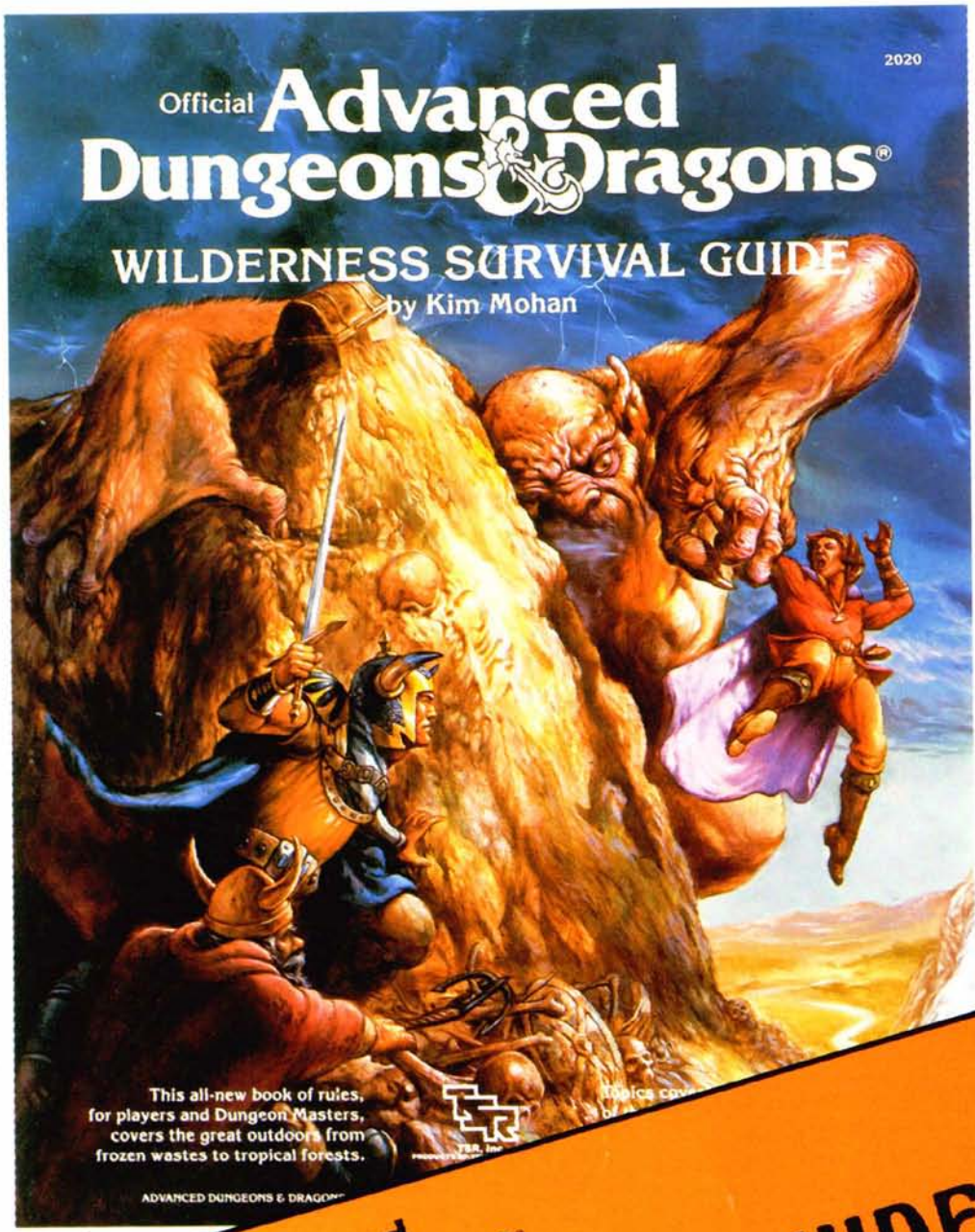
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